

# THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1878.

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## POMEROY ABBEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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### CHAPTER I.

JOAN POMEROY.

NEVER was there a more gloomy structure than that of the old Abbey of Pomeroy, with its grey walls, overgrown in places with lichen and other kinds of moss, its narrow Gothic casements, and its decaying towers. It was in keeping with the scenery around. Situated on a wild part of the coast of England, it was flanked by bleak and bold rocks on the one side, and a dark forest on the other. Not that the trees were in close proximity to the abbey; they were considerably removed from it, forming, as it were, a background in the distance. The abbey faced the east; and from its front descended a gentle hill, where a few houses, most of them very poor, were honoured with the title of village, taking its name from their site, "Abbeyland;" for the houses were built on lands pertaining to it. This hill wound round to the right, and led onwards to the dark and gloomy forest. In days gone by, in the time of the Norman kings, this place had been the stronghold of the De Pomeroyes, who were noted warriors; then they seemed to have dwindled away and disappeared, and the abbey was for a century or two the abode of some religious order of monks. After that, it had come again into the hands of the Pomeroyes, who professed to be lineal descendants of the ancient family, and who in fact were so. They retained their original faith, that of Roman Catholic, but they dropped the "de" before their name. The reigning head and chief of the abbey was called the Lord of Pomeroy; a privilege bestowed, it was said, upon the family by one of our Norman kings.

The abbey was built in the form of a quadrangle ; a solid square stone building, with a turret at each corner. The entrance gates, of massive iron, stood in the middle of the front, or east pile. Entering these gates, and passing their dark, spacious archway, to the square opening that lay in the midst of the building, we see how large it is. Each side contains rooms enough for a numerous household. Standing with our faces to the entrance gates, the chief, or east pile lies before us, and its corner turret to our left hand as we stand, is called the East Tower. The north wing lies between the east and the north towers ; the west wing lies between the north and the west towers (and which west wing forms the back of the structure) ; and the south wing, lying to our right between the west and south towers, brings us back to the front and starting point. Of these various piles, or sides, or wings, as you may please to call them, only the front and the north are inhabited at present, though all (save the west) are furnished for occupation in a greater or lesser degree. The rooms in the west wing, and more particularly those in the west tower, have the reputation of being haunted ; and for a long time past no one has lived in them. It should also be said that this west wing, though apparently looking as large as the other wings to us who stand in the open quadrangle below, is a very deceptive wing. For it is not half the width of the other wings ; and the rooms, instead of being numerous, are few, and all of them look out upon the abbey itself, and the quadrangle it encloses, there being no windows whatever at the back. As to the quadrangle itself, with its grassy flooring, if that term may be allowed, it looks exactly like a gloomy grave-yard enclosed by cloisters. All round the quadrangle, between the abbey and the grass, lie roofed cloisters supported by pillars ; their casements are unglazed, open to the quadrangle ; doors lead from it into the quadrangle in places, as they do from the cloisters into the house.

If there were a window looking out to the back in the west wing, and we could take our stand at it, we should look upon a wide expanse of wood and dale. To the right, as we are supposing that we look, lie the stables and coach houses ; beyond them is the chapel, surmounted by its quaint cross, and the grave-yard beside it. Near the grave-yard is the little house inhabited by the priest, Father Andrew, who shrives the abbey and the village and the neighbourhood in general, for nearly everybody is of the old faith. A long way further off may be seen the chimnies of a large building rising against the horizon : they belong to a convent. It has existed for centuries, having been spared the destruction which so many other religious communities underwent in troublous times, though a portion of it was once rebuilt after a fire. It is of a rigid order, and is an educational establishment as well as a convent. A few houses nestling within their own grounds may be observed, scattered here and there in the distance : some good catholic families inhabit them, drawn to

the neighbourhood originally by the convent, and by the far-famed abbey and its strictly Roman catholic owners.

Rather to our left, and very near the abbey, stands a small, round stone building, grey and old ; it is covered with moss like the abbey, and is called the keep. A slope of green grass descends from it somewhat abruptly to a low level dell ; and then the ground gently rises again to the abbey walls. At present this keep is vacant ; but it has sometimes been inhabited by one or other faithful retainer of the family when he has grown too old for service ; it is said that the present lord intends his own man, Jerome, to retire to it later. On this west side the abbey has no entrance whatever. Neither has the south side any outer entrance ; if you want to enter it you must travel round to the front gates. On the north side lie the garden and grounds, which are extensive.

Hugh, Lord of Pomeroy, the present chief and head of the family, had two daughters and four sons : Guy, Rupert, George, and Leolin ; Guy of course being the heir. George, Captain Pomeroy, was with his regiment in Ireland, though he had recently been sojourning at the abbey ; in fact, as his father told him, he seemed to be always getting leave of absence and coming home. Leolin was on the continent, being an attaché at one of our embassies there. Guy and Rupert were at home ; neither had any profession or calling. Guy was the heir : and Rupert had come into a fair fortune when he was of age, bequeathed to him by his mother, because he was the second son, though it was well-known that her favourite son was the third, George. The rest thought it very unfair that Rupert should have this money, Guy especially ; but the Lady of Pomeroy had so left it in her will, and nothing could be done about it after her death. It might have been just as well that Rupert had not inherited the bequest. He had hastened to London, to Paris, and to other gay places, and spent it right and left. When it was all gone, and more to it, for which he was in debt thick and three-fold, back he came to the abbey and took up his abode in it. That was a twelvemonth ago, and here he was still.

Guy and Rupert Pomeroy were remarkably tall, fine men, just of a height, nearly six feet three, and alike in figure. They had both the high, handsome features of the Pomeroyes, the bright brown hair, and the deep-grey eyes : but there the resemblance apparently ended. Guy was of a pale complexion, almost ghastly ; his features, in themselves as well formed as Rupert's, were rendered plain by their exceedingly stern expression, and by his possessing what is called a hare lip, all efforts to close which had failed in infancy. Rupert's complexion was more fresh and beautiful than is often owned by man, the expression of his face was winning, though somewhat free, and his mouth was one of great sweetness. In voice also they differed : Guy's being deep and harsh, Rupert's pleasant as music.

It was a bright summer morning, and the cloth for breakfast

was laid in the usual room; a small apartment on the first floor, that looked to the front of the abbey. Many of the rooms on the ground floor were given over to the servants: and their windows were all protected outside by cross-bars of iron. Standing at the narrow open casement of this breakfast-room, while waiting for her father and brothers, was Miss Pomeroy, gazing out upon the old familiar features, which she had not seen so long: the rocks, the straggling village, and a large white house nearly hidden by trees, which lay half way up the hill beyond. She had returned home the previous evening from an absence of eight months. Some years ago her sister Isabel had married the Honourable Henry Capel, and had already more children than she could count. Joan often went to stay with her, but had never remained away so long before. She had been named Joan after a certain Dame Joan de Pomeroy, famous for her beauty in the reign of King John. Poor Joan—this Joan—was plain, tall, and angular, her hair very dark, and her complexion nearly olive coloured; but her features were good. She was twenty-nine this year; her sister Isabel, the eldest of the family, being one year older. Rupert entered.

"What are you looking at, Joan?"

"Not at anything in particular. Just then I was watching the smoke curling up from the White House. How do you get on with its inmates, Rupert? Have you become intimate with them?"

"Guy has."

"Guy!"

"He and the lord are there often. Indeed, I began to think that we were going to be presented, gratis, with a lady-in-law——"

"Rupert!" interrupted Joan, in a tone of rebuke.

"Or step-lady—how runs it?" continued the unmoved Rupert. "Until I found that the play lay in a different direction. The lord and Mrs. Wyld were but courting for their children."

Joan drew up her head. "As if papa would condescend to anything of the kind, Rupert! Tell me what you mean."

"The son-and-heir is to settle," cried Rupert; "so runs the programme; and——"

"Guy cannot afford it. You have all been too extravagant for him to think of marrying: papa has often told him so. Two households in the abbey would double the present cost."

"I should like to have a guinea for every superfluous word you drop in a day, Joan," laughed Rupert Pomeroy, who was the essence of good temper. "Guy will afford an establishment——if he gets the young lady. She has five-and-twenty thousand pounds—to be paid down on her wedding-day."

"Are you speaking of the mother or the daughter?"

"Well done, Joan! The mother is double Guy's age—or getting on for it. I said on the wedding-day."



"But—will—she, the daughter, have Guy?" slowly and doubtfully ejaculated Miss Pomeroy.

Rupert opened another of the narrow casements, and put his head out. He whistled to one of his pointers, which was frolicing below with the gamekeeper, Gaunt.

"Rupert! Rupert!" exclaimed his sister, petulantly, "you know when I want to hear a thing I must hear it. I say, will Alice Wylde accept Guy?"

Rupert drew in his head. "You had better ask that of Guy himself."

"Is it true that she will have so large a sum?"

"That's true. Her father was in India: a nabob—or rajah—or merchant—something they make fortunes at, out there: and she inherits. There'll be another twenty-five thousand when her mother dies: or more."

"She will never have Guy: she is too beautiful."

"Pretty women often marry ugly men, and——hush!" broke off Rupert: "here he comes, the son-and-heir."

Guy Pomeroy was heard outside, talking. His temper had made him not loved by his brothers and sisters, over whom he assumed too much authority. But the lord doted on him. In Guy he saw his son-and-heir: and his constant allusions to Guy's being such, had caused the rest to apply the term to Guy derisively. Haughty, arrogant, and fearful spendthrifts, the Pomeroyes, from the lord downwards, had outrun their income; but this was not known to the world; and Guy, between whom and his father there existed entire confidence, had reached the age of eight-and-twenty without thought of marrying. "You must wait until I'm gone, Guy," the lord sometimes said to him; "you'll have the whole then." But while things were in this state, the White House changed its tenants, and became inhabited by the rich widow and daughter of Mr. Wylde.

But not for the sake of her fortune did Guy Pomeroy think of sacrificing his liberty: that the money may have added weight to the inducement, was probable, but the fresh beauty of Alice Wylde had caught his eye and heart. When those cold natures, such as Guy's, do love, they love passionately: and, with an impassioned fervour that is not often equalled, had Guy Pomeroy learnt to love Alice Wylde. Rupert did not explain this to his sister; he parried her questions, and seemed to treat the whole as a joke to be laughed at.

"I hear George has been at home again," she resumed.

"George? Yes, he came soon after you left home, I think; he stayed for some months."

"I wonder he likes to idle away so much of his time—and I wonder he gets the leave to do it," remarked Joan. "He cannot find much amusement here, I should think. But George was always idly inclined, and down here he is of course relieved from duty."

As she spoke, Guy Pomeroy entered. Joan went up to him and

they kissed each other: they had not previously met since her return. Guy took his seat at the breakfast-table, and motioned to her to do the same.

"Guy," she began, as she obeyed him, with little regard to his feelings or to her own good manners, "Rupert says you wish to marry Miss Wylde. Will she have you?"

A hot flush illumined Guy's white cheek; proving, of itself, how very deep his love had gone. He drew himself up haughtily.

"Let Rupert concern himself with his fishing and his shooting, and his other—more questionable—sports: but let him not concern himself with me."

He rang the bell as he spoke; Rupert, still looking from the case-ment, appeared not to hear. Jerome came in, the lord's personal attendant; a faithful serving-man over fifty years old.

"The lord breakfasts in his room," said Guy.

"Yes sir, I know it," replied Jerome. "He has slept badly."

Joan was busy with the breakfast-table. She could not domineer over Guy, as she did over Rupert: not that the latter heeded her domineering, for he was good-tempered and careless. Once, when Guy had declined to tell her something she wished to know, and she had teased him to anger, he struck her. She said no more now about Alice Wylde, but let the conversation drift to general subjects, and the breakfast passed in peace.

The meal over, she went up to her father. A grand, tall, old man, with a grey, handsome face, and grey hair. Now that Joan saw him by daylight, she noticed how ill and worn he looked. He was slowly eating his breakfast at a small round table drawn to the fire in his own sitting-room.

"Papa, you don't look well."

"No? I can't get over that last attack of mine, child."

"And you have a fire! It is a very warm day."

"I never feel warm now. There, let my ailments alone, Joan. Talk of something else."

"Papa, is Guy to marry Alice Wylde?"

The lord looked up. "Who has made you so wise?"

"Rupert."

"It is no business of Rupert's."

"Papa, I do not suppose she would have Guy."

"Not have Guy! I can tell you that an alliance with the future Lord of Pomeroy is what many a young lady, far higher in position and lineage than she, would kneel for. She and Mrs. Wylde see it in the right light, and are eager for it. Do you think that so strange a thing, Joan?"

"Well, papa, you know that Guy is stern of manner and not much liked in general. And one so rich and beautiful as Miss Wylde can choose as she will."

"But Guy will be Lord of Pomeroy. To be his wife, is what a

daughter of the highest noble in the land would covet. And Guy will make a good husband—unless I am mistaken. At any rate, Joan, the matter lies entirely with himself and Miss Wylde: it is scarcely seemly that you should thus comment upon it.”

“I’m sure, papa, I wish Guy every happiness,” replied Joan, her eyes filling at the reproof. “If he and Miss Wylde like one another, I could desire nothing better.”

“Guy likes her; be very sure of that. And, if Mrs. Wylde is to be believed, the daughter likes him. And now you may leave me, my dear: I am expecting Father Andrew.”

As Joan went out of the room, she met him. He wore his priestly garments, by which Joan knew that he was going in for some office of religion. Father Andrew’s face, a pleasant, rubicund face at all times, brightened at the sight of her. He was a stout man, of middle height, and of some five-and-forty years.

“Welcome home, my child. We have been dull without you.”

“Father,” she whispered, after responding to his greeting, “do you think papa is seriously ill? He looks so changed.”

“He is weaker than I like to see him; that’s a fact. But that last fit of gout was a sharp one, and tried him terribly.”

“But that was three months ago.”

“True. Still, he has never seemed quite the same since. And he is not cautious enough as to what he takes. Poor living does not suit the Pomeroy. However, let us hope that he will get up his strength shortly.”

Father Andrew passed into the lord’s room, and Joan went about her business in the abbey. Visiting the housekeeper, Mrs. Rex, and other of the upper servants, and superintending the putting away of her own wardrobe—which she liked to do, rather than leave it entirely to her maid. What with one thing and another, she was pretty busy until luncheon-time. Early in the afternoon, she called Bridget—who was the housekeeper’s niece and a favourite servant.

“I want you to go as far as the lodge,” she said. “Tell Sybilla—tell Miss Gaunt that I am come home; though I daresay she has heard it. Give my love to her and ask her to come up to see me.”

Away went Bridget on her errand. She was soon back again; for the lodge was only just beyond the village.

“Miss Gaunt’s kind love and duty to you, Miss Joan; but she has one of her bad headaches this afternoon, and is not able to wait on you,” was the message Bridget brought. And Joan Pomeroy’s usually placid features took a momentary cross expression—for she liked Sybilla Gaunt and was fond of her occasional companionship.

The family dined alone. Not in the great dining-hall below, but with all the usual state and ceremony pertaining to the Pomeroy. The lord headed his table and Joan faced him; Guy and Rupert being on either side. To be alone at dinner was rather an unusual

circumstance ; for the abbey was fond of guests, though it might be but Father Andrew. But the lord was losing his energy, and of late seemed not to care how much he was left in quiet. With the removal of the cloth, Joan quitted the room. Rupert followed her, and strolled out. Guy remained with his father.

"Where have you been all the afternoon?" demanded the lord. "At the White House?"

"I called there," replied Guy.

"When do you mean to bring matters to a close? It seems to me that you are holding off unaccountably. Speak to her off-hand, Guy, and don't be afraid. I never knew that a Pomeroy could be scared by a woman."

Guy Pomeroy's livid face turned scarlet; a far deeper scarlet than that called up by Joan's bold question in the morning. If the proud old chief could but have known its cause!

"There is plenty of time," replied Guy, evasively.

"As you please, Guy. I thought your heart was set upon the match. I'm sure I don't wish to urge it, if you don't."

"Time enough," muttered Guy. "Father, drink claret; so much port is not good for you."

"I hate claret," said the lord; "not a drop should be on my table, but for fashion's sake. I never could get used to it as a young man, and I can't as an old one. In my day, Guy, the creed was to despise everything French."

"But think of the gout, sir. Jerome is fearing another attack."

"Jerome would fear his own shadow," said the Lord of Pomeroy.

Meanwhile, Rupert strolled leisurely along, just as though he had no object in life save to look about him; but when he was beyond view of the abbey, he mended his pace, and went as if he were walking for a wager. It was a lovely summer's evening, and the setting sun threw its red and golden light athwart the heavy trees in the distance. Crossing some fields, by a sheltered path, he emerged from them at the back of the White House, and entered its garden by a small door.

Not to the open part of it: no, Rupert Pomeroy dared not do that, lest he should encounter the lynx eyes of Mrs. Wyld. He kept amidst the clump of shrubs that skirted the wall, and peeped out beyond them to see what was to be seen.

He saw a bright, radiant-looking girl, her dark brown hair shining in the slanting beams of the sun, and her cheeks damask with expectation. She was in an evening dress of white, and wore a small thin gold chain round her neck, and similar bracelets on her arms; and she was flitting from bed to bed, plucking a flower from one, stooping to inhale the scent of another, and—drawing further from the windows of the house: drawing, as if unconsciously, and without any apparent design. Just in the same manner, you observe, that Mr. Rupert Pomeroy had drawn away from the abbey.

Rupert Pomeroy, talking with his sister, had said the late Mr. Wylde had been something in India—a nabob, or rajah, or merchant—something at which people made fortunes. In point of fact, Mr. Wylde had not been any one of the three: he had been a railway contractor. The greater portion of his fortune was made at home; though he did go out to India, and died there. Of his large fortune, twenty-five thousand pounds were left to his daughter, to be paid to her on her marriage; and the rest (which was something like another twenty-five thousand doubled) would be hers on the death of his wife.

Mrs. Wylde and Alice came home from India—having accompanied Mr. Wylde thither—conscious of possessing more riches than they well knew how to count. The contractor had been a close man as to his means, and the wife had never supposed that he was worth a tithe of what those means turned out to be. Being so wealthy, it was of course incumbent on the widow to set-up her tent accordingly; so looked out for some pleasant locality where Roman Catholics congregated—for the Wylde family were of that persuasion—and was directed to Abbeyland. Mrs. Wylde took upon long lease the White House, which belonged to the Pomeroy family, and settled down in it.

They were very pleasant people, this widow and daughter; the latter was also lovely; and Guy and Rupert Pomeroy called upon and paid court to their new tenants. Rumours of the girl's great wealth got about, and the Lord of Pomeroy began to pay them attention himself. Guy's heart, hitherto invulnerable, fell before the charms of the young lady; the lord read the signs, and favoured the project. He was a proud old man, and the Wylde family were nobodies; but money was wanted at Pomeroy, and he put the riches against the lack of descent. "One can't have everything nowadays," he remarked to Guy.

The lord, when speaking to Joan, had used the right term with regard to Mrs. Wylde—she was "eager" for the match. Mrs. Wylde's husband had not much to boast of in the way of descent; she had as little; was, in short, of no "descent" whatever. As a matter of course—at least, it is a matter of course with many such people—she was most inordinately alive to the advantages of rank. Her own turn was over; she could not be other than she was; but to see Alice wed into a noble family was her first earthly ambition: and when the heir of Pomeroy permitted himself to show indication that he was paying court to Alice, her exultation knew no bounds. Once let Alice become his wife, and Mrs. Wylde would fold her hands in contentment and sit down upon her laurels for life.

What though Guy Pomeroy was stern of mien and plain of face?—as Alice remonstrated. "Look at him from a little distance," said Mrs. Wylde, "and where else would you find so handsome a form, so noble a man?—it was only when you were close to him that

you perceived his lip had a little defect in it, and his face was somewhat pale."

"Yes," answered Alice again, "but wives did not look at husbands from a distance; they passed their days close to them."

However, she might have been tempted to take Guy, for she was just as great a worshipper of rank as her mother, and no doubt would have taken him, but for one unfortunate circumstance—she had fallen in love with his brother Rupert.

And Mrs. Wylde saw nothing of the mischief until it was done. We rarely suspect the treason that goes on under our very eyes. Rupert and Guy were alike equally welcomed to the White House: metaphorically, Mrs. Wylde worshipped anybody bearing the name of Pomeroy. Rupert and Alice had plenty of time and opportunity given them to fall in love with one another.

But suddenly, without the slightest warning, Mrs. Wylde saw something one day, or thought she saw it, that she did not approve of—something like a private understanding between her daughter and Rupert: and a faint and very disagreeable suspicion dawned upon her that Alice might be getting to enjoy the society of the handsome Rupert more than that of Guy. Alice made a joke of her mother's "fancy," as she called it, denying it utterly; and Mrs. Wylde was fain to be appeased. But the incident taught her caution: and from that hour Rupert Pomeroy's visits to the house were discouraged. Call when he would, he could not get admittance: the ladies were out, or the ladies were engaged.

Alice Wylde had not been well trained. Anything but that. Whether she was by nature self-willed and deceitful, or whether present circumstances were imparting those qualities to her, cannot be known. Vain to a fault, was she; passionately fond of admiration; and, with it all, a perfect coquette.

Nearly from the very first she had detected the heir of Pomeroy's serious feeling for her. It gratified her beyond everything. *She drew him on*; flirting, laughing, talking; playing off her pretty airs and graces upon him. It may be, that she did not know what she was doing—what drawing him on to; it may be that she deemed his feelings might be shallow as her own—if, indeed, hers were shallow—and that if his wings did get a little singed in the radiant light of her presence, they would soon heal again. It may be, too, that she changed her tactics in a degree as the love grew between her and Rupert; and that if she did not absolutely repress Guy, she did not continue to give him encouragement.

The Lord of Pomeroy gave a word of reproach to his son Guy at the dinner-table, for not pursuing more ardently his suit with Miss Wylde. Guy's face had flushed hot with emotion, and Guy had turned the subject off. He had cause to do both.

That very afternoon Guy Pomeroy had staked his die and lost it: he had offered himself to Alice Wylde, and been refused.



"You must accept me ; you have led me to think that you would," pleaded Guy, in his shock of surprise. "I love you too passionately to lose you."

But Alice only said he was mistaken, and rejected him utterly. She gave him no hope whatever ; on the contrary, she forbade him to think of hope then or ever. And the heir of Pomeroy left the house a mortified and (so far as his hopes went) a crushed man.

## CHAPTER II.

### AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

MRS. WYLDE chanced to be from home during the visit of Guy Pomeroy, just spoken of, and knew nothing of what had transpired ; neither was it disclosed to her, then or later. Her carriage drove in late, close upon the dinner hour ; she hastened to dress, and then joined her daughter in the drawing-room.

"Does Mr. Pomeroy dine here ?" enquired Mrs. Wylde, who was a little, fair woman, with cold light eyes and very light hair, and wore this evening a maize-coloured net dress with Indian ornaments.

"No, mamma."

"But I told you, Alice, to invite him if he called."

"I really forget whether I asked him or not," said Alice, indifferently. "I fancy I did not."

"You appear to be growing very forgetful of late," returned Mrs. Wylde. "Dinner, Cannet ? That's right : I am fearfully hungry."

Mrs. Wylde liked her dinner : there was always a good one at the White House, whether on feast days or meagre days : and her vexation at Alice's indifference and the absence of Guy Pomeroy was soon forgotten. She began talking of the law-business which had called her to the distant county town.

"Miss Pomeroy is come home," observed Alice.

"Is she ? When did she come ?"

"Last night, I think he said."

"Who said ?"

"Mr. Pomeroy."

"We will walk over to-morrow and see her."

Dinner over, and dessert begun, Alice took a little fruit, and then, quitting the table without ceremony or apology, passed out at the glass doors, which stood open to the warm air and setting sun. You have already seen her : for this was spoken of before : in her white dress, with the gold circlets on her neck and arms, and the damask colour of expectation on her cheeks.

"Alice," called out Mrs. Wylde, "I wish you would put a scarf over your shoulders, and take a parasol. You generally choose this hour for loitering in the garden, when the sun is full upon it."

"Mamma, I shall not take cold."

"I don't suppose you will. I was not thinking of cold: but you'll tan your neck. The hot sun of summer tans as much at its setting as at mid-day."

Alice Wylde folded her lace pocket-handkerchief, and threw it over her neck.

"You have not taken your wine," pursued Mrs. Wylde.

"I don't want it, mamma. I took some at dinner."

Alice buried her face in a rose-tree as she spoke, inhaling its perfume. Mrs. Wylde took the glass of port wine which she had poured out for Alice, and drank it herself. Mrs. Wylde thought it wrong to waste good wine, and she was very fond of port. She liked to take two or three glasses of it after dinner, and then to fall, when alone, into a comfortable doze. Thus, on these favourable opportunities, as Alice considered them, on these evenings when they were not on ceremony, Alice got at least an hour to herself to linger in the garden, to look at the rising moon, and listen to the nightingales.

Well for her—oh, more than well, if she had seen and listened to nothing else! Strolling from flower to flower, she drew gradually more and more away from the house, turned the corner to the grove of shrubs and trees, and was lost to sight. Mrs. Wylde had forgotten to think about her then, and was deep in rose-coloured visions of that desirable time when she should shoot up a few feet on the world's pinnacle, as the mother of the Lady of Pomeroy.

Amidst the friendly, sheltering trees stood Rupert. Opening his arms he drew Alice to him. "My dearest!"

"Oh, Rupert, I thought this evening would never come! I have so wanted to see you, and—and—tell you something. That is, if it would not be wrong to do it. I hardly know."

"Wrong to do it—to tell me anything!" he returned. "What can you know, Alice, that you may not share with me?"

"I will tell you; yes, I will: but you must never, never let it transpire that you do know it. It would be cruel to him."

"To whom?"

"Guy. He came this afternoon to ask me to be his wife."

Rupert received the news with equanimity: perhaps the young lady had thought he would be moved by it. "Well?" said he, "what was your answer?"

"I told him I was sorry, but that I did not love him, and it was of no use his asking me to."

Rupert laughed. He had his arm round her waist. "What did Guy say to that?"

"I hardly know what he said. My mind was in a whirl and I did not catch his words—only their sense. He said he loved me as no other man had loved woman, for his passions were vehement within him, and it was I alone who had ever called them forth."

"You might have told him that *one* other, at any rate, loved you as passionately as he."

"He then spoke about being Guy Pomeroy of Pomeroy, and ——"  
Rupert threw back his head. "That's Guy all over. Of course he is that: but he need not enlarge upon it. How did it end?"

"He would not take my refusal. He did not seem to believe in it. He said young ladies rarely knew their own minds; that I had had no experience; and that he should never give me up while he had life. But I think, for all that, he did believe me, Rupert."

"Of course he did. You must keep him at a distance now."

"He said he should come to the White House as usual, and he hoped that I should in a few weeks grant him a different answer."

"And pray what did you say to that?"

"Nothing. Except that if he did continue to come he must consider himself entirely mamma's visitor, not mine."

Rupert bent his face until his cheek touched hers while he whispered his sweet vows of love. She resisted not: for, passionately as Guy Pomeroy loved Alice, did she in her turn love Rupert. Whether Mr. Rupert's affection was very ardent is doubtful, for he had paid such vows many a time before. Rupert Pomeroy was a general admirer of pretty women; and it often happens that those general admirers are not capable of that one pure, ardent passion which can stir man's heart but once. He loved Alice Wylde in his own fashion; quite sufficiently so to make her his wife. He hoped she would be his wife; though he did not see his way clear to make her so at present; for Mrs. Wylde would be dead against him, and so would be the Lord of Pomeroy. The lord favoured Guy's suit, he would but resent his, Rupert's; the lord wanted Guy to be happy and rich. Guy, if he must marry, needed money with his wife: but Guy did not need money half as much as Rupert did.

Rupert drew her arm within his, and they paced the narrow sheltered walk. Alice took courage to ask Rupert what his future prospects were. Rupert replied vaguely. They did not appear to be at all tangible: but he was of sanguine spirit, and talked glowingly, as one who meant to set the Thames on fire. Thus the time passed, all too swiftly for them. Wrapt in the magic of each other's presence, in the melody of love's golden chords, they saw not how swiftly the light was fading; and the sun had set, and the evening star shone in the heavens, when Alice awoke to reality.

"Oh Rupert! see how late it is! What a long while we must have been walking here! What will mamma say?"

"Nothing. Your mamma is yet in her after-dinner nap."

"I don't know that. I have never stayed so late as this."

"You have had more to tell me than you ever had before."

"To tell you?"

"Guy's presumption. Well, we must check-mate him; though it may take time to do it. Fare you well for to-night, my best and dearest."

Alice stole back to the house, not by the open lawn, but by a side

path, her heart living over again the stolen interview, her cheeks crimson with the pressure of Rupert's lips.

"Tiresome old creature!—he's always doing it!"

Now the words, fretfully spoken, did not apply to him who was filling her thoughts, Rupert Pomeroy, but to that worthy man, Cannet, the butler. Alice had made her way to a convenient side-door, and found it fastened. It chanced, however, that Cannet was close by at the moment she tried it; he unbolted it and threw it open.

"I never saw any one like you in my life, Cannet!—bolting and barring the doors at this hour, as if you feared we were going to be robbed! An evening or two ago, in the broad sunshine, I tried this door and found it locked."

"I'm very sorry, Miss Alice. But there's a lot of tramps about; there always is in hot weather, and it's right to be cautious."

"As if tramps would come now! They would let it get dark first."

Cannet knew that the twilight hour was just the one favoured by tramps; but he did not say so. Alice went into the drawing-room; played softly for a minute or two, and then crossed the hall to the dining-room—startling her mother from her doze. The long drive had tired Mrs. Wylde.

"Why, mamma, what a sleep you are taking!"

"Am I! What's the time? Dear me, why it's getting dusk. Why did you not wake me before, Alice? Where have you been?"

"I came here from the piano—wondering what had become of you."

Mrs. Wylde rang the bell, and then quitted the room with her daughter. Alice sat down again to the piano, and the tea came in.

And poor Mrs. Wylde, stirring and tasting it, had no more notion of the treason that had been enacted, than you have that you are going to be made a duke to-morrow, my good reader. Ah, girls think themselves very clever, those who can act thus; but let them be assured that a day of reckoning must come. Alice Wylde saw no harm in deceiving her mother, or in the deceit itself—but that same day of reckoning might be laying up its vengeance even for her.

Mrs. Wylde, having attained a position in the great world, of course deemed it necessary to borrow its manners and customs. Time was, not so very long ago either, when she saw no necessity to keep a maid for her personal service; but now she kept two maids, one for herself, the other for her daughter. As Alice went into her room this night, the latter was waiting for her as usual. She was a respectable looking, plain-dressing woman of thirty; her hair, already slightly grey, was braided over her forehead; her face was thoughtful and sensible. In the earlier days this girl had been the housemaid. She was good and faithful; and of their own religion. Mrs. Wylde took her to India, and afterwards she became Alice's attendant, of whom she was very fond.

"What's the matter, Theresa?" asked Alice: for the servant had

her cheek bent upon her hands. "Is your tooth aching again? Why don't you go to the town and have it taken out?"

"And so I would," said Theresa, "if I were sure it was the tooth. I think it is—what's that fine new name?—neuralgia."

Alice laughed. "Neuralgia is as old as I am, Theresa."

"Well, miss, we have always said rheumatism. That was fine enough for us. Shall I begin your hair, Miss Alice?"

Alice was standing at the open window, gazing outwards. The moon was riding in the sky, the few stars that were out twinkled in their course: beneath, lay the grass-plot and the sweet flowers, and beyond rose the grove that had sheltered her and Rupert. Lost in memory, Alice stood on, oblivious of there being any such duties as undressing. Theresa waited, mentally debating whether she should speak of a certain matter that was troubling her, or whether she should not.

"Mamma's as tired as she can be," began Alice, her thoughts wandering to her mother. "It is a long drive; and she says she felt quite weary with the deeds the lawyer had to read to her."

"It is a good long way to Owlstone, miss—there and back."

"Mamma slept till tea-time, and then was angry with me for not awaking her. I was in the garden. And what a stupid thing that Cannel is!—locking all the doors by daylight!"

Now it seemed to Theresa—who was reflective, conscientious, and a little given to be swayed by signs and symptoms—that her young mistress must have unconsciously opened out this very subject on purpose to afford her an excuse for speaking: and she seized upon it. Walking nearer to the window, she began in a low tone.

"I saw you there, Miss Alice."

"Saw me—where?" returned Alice, rather sharply.

"Out yonder, Miss Alice: down by the grove. Mr. Rupert Pomeroy was with you."

Alice was silent. This avowal was very awkward.

"How could you have seen me?" she presently asked, the question occurring to her. "Where were you, Theresa?"

"I went to the herb-bed: some of them downstairs said that a fomentation of hot sage-leaves to my cheek would ease the pain: and this," nodding at the broad gravel path beneath, "is the nearest way, so I took the liberty of taking it. I saw you as I turned the corner, Miss Alice; you stood with your backs to me, both you and Mr. Rupert. He had his arm round your waist."

"Dear me, had he?"—after a rather dismayed pause. "He is very thoughtless. We were talking about something or other, I suppose. But now, Theresa, don't you go telling this to mamma."

"Miss Alice," said the woman, gravely, "I came to your papa's house when you were but a little girl, and there was but two servants in all; and I have watched you grow up, and I have got fonder of you and prouder of you year by year. But, oh, my dear young lady

—and for the reason I've just given, perhaps you'll let me say it—it is not right to be so familiar with Mr. Rupert when you are to marry Mr. Pomeroy."

"You stupid thing, Theresa! Who told you, pray, that I was to marry Mr. Pomeroy?"

"My mistress told me."

"Just like mamma!—fancying a thing must come to pass because she wishes it! Well now, the truth is, Theresa—and I don't mind telling it you, but you must take care not to repeat it again to mamma—that I am *not* going to marry Mr. Pomeroy."

"Then, Miss Alice, why not tell your mamma so?"

"I shall tell mamma in good time. But I'm sure you know there'll be no living in the house with her for a week afterwards. She has set her mind upon Mr. Pomeroy; and she will be ready to box my ears when she finds I won't have him."

"But, Miss Alice—you have encouraged Mr. Pomeroy," debated Theresa, feeling less sure and less easy upon the point than she chose to say. "He comes often: he stayed with you in the drawing-room for nearly an hour to-day."

"I can't help his staying—or his coming. Mamma was out, and I had to go to him. Don't you be silly, Theresa. I tell you I am not going to take the Heir of Pomeroy. And he knows that I am not."

"Trouble of this kind is more easy to get into than to get out of, Miss Alice," resumed Theresa in a low, persuasive tone. "I confess I like Mr. Rupert better than I like Mr. Pomeroy; though it's not for me to presume to speak of my likes or dislikes. I would only just say this, my dear young lady: *don't deceive anybody*, especially your mother. If you don't like Mr. Pomeroy, and don't wish to have him, tell out the truth at once. 'Tis the safest way in the long run."

"There, you can do my hair now, Theresa. And don't worry your silly old head with what does not concern it. Things will come all right in what you call the long run, as you will find."

Leaving Alice to chatter to Theresa upon less embarrassing subjects, we will go after Rupert Pomeroy.

Passing through the convenient side gate to the shady lane on which it opened, went he, gay as a lark, humming the bars of some popular song. Rupert Pomeroy was of an essentially gay, sanguine, light temperament: he had never been grave in his life for two minutes together. The branches of the trees on either side this lane met overhead; glancing up, he saw the moonbeams flickering through them—a pleasant sight; and he broke out into his song again.

"Oh, 'tis sweet when the moon is beaming  
To rove through the shady grove:  
Oh, 'tis sweet when the world is sleeping  
To list to the nightingale's song."

"Don't think that's quite right," broke off Rupert, alluding to



the words. "Think the nightingale's song goes with the moonbeams. Wish she could have stayed out longer—that 'sweet love o' mine.'"

Before quite reaching the village, he turned aside to the left. Standing at some little distance from the road was an exceedingly pretty dwelling-house, not much larger indeed than a cottage; its rough stone walls were covered with ivy, jessamine and roses encircled its casements. You might have been puzzled to guess to what social class its inmates belonged; in all, save its size, it might have been the abode of a gentleman. Iron railings, covered with clematis, enclosed a small garden, its grass-plat and flower-beds not less well kept than were those of Mrs. Wyld. The gate was in the middle of the rails, a path leading straight from it to the cottage porch. It was the dwelling of the game-keeper, Gaunt, and it was called the Lodge. John Gaunt—who was not a regular game-keeper and who will have to be spoken of later—lived in it with his only child, a daughter. Leaning over the gate in the moonlight stood the daughter now. Rupert saw her and turned aside.

"I thought it must be you, Sybilla," spoke he in his ready, free way. "What in the world have you got on?"

She laughed slightly, and pushed off the shawl in which her head was enveloped. "I have a little cold," she answered, "and my head has been aching all day."

"By the way—yes. Joan mentioned at dinner that she had sent for you, and you were too ill to come," observed Rupert, who remained on the outer side of the gate. "What was the matter?"

A hot flush and a slight contraction of the brow, not discernible in the moonlight, passed suddenly over her face, apparently called up by Rupert's words. Sybilla Gaunt was a magnificent girl, tall, dignified, upright; with a no less magnificent face: her features regally beautiful, her hair of a purple black; and her large eyes of a deep, dark violet. But, with all her natural beauty, the face looked to-night strangely wan and haggard.

"My head pained me so," she replied slightly and evasively. "How is the lord, Mr. Rupert?"

"Oh, he is very well."

"My father thinks him much changed of late. He was at the Abbey yesterday morning—the lord had sent to him about those preserves beyond the hill. He says he never saw anyone change so rapidly for the worse as the lord is changing now."

"So Joan thinks—but she has not seen him for eight months, you know. I hope he will be all right again soon, Sybilla. Where is your father to-night?"

"He went up to Whittaker's. Do you want him?"

Without giving any direct answer, Rupert Pomeroy bent his head closer to Sybilla's over the gate, and began talking to her in a very low tone—just as if he feared some eavesdropper might be hidden under the clematis. As we cannot hear what he said, the conversa-

tion must remain a secret. Sybilla gave an answering word, or a nod, now and again; the tears meanwhile gathering on her eyelashes, and she, half stealthily, wiping them away from time to time.

"Who's this?" suddenly cried Rupert, drawing away from the gate, his ear having caught the sound of footsteps close at hand. "Take courage, Sybilla."

They were the steps of Gaunt himself. A very tall and noble-looking man, dressed in a velveteen coat and breeches and dark leggings. His features were just as handsome as his daughter's, the two faces in fact were much alike; the same the noble cast of countenance, the same the fine, open, straightforward expression. As he came into view, Sybilla nodded to Rupert, and went in.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Rupert? Did you want me?"

"No; I was only saying good-evening to Sybilla, seeing her standing here as I was going by. She says you think my father much changed."

"And so he is, Mr. Rupert; there's no doubt of it. Unless he gets to look better, I—I shall hardly know what to fear. Will you walk in?"

"Not to-night. I say, Gaunt, what about dragging that fish-pond?"

"The very thing I have just been up to Whittaker's about, Mr. Rupert. We had decided to do it to-morrow, but your brother sent me word this evening that it must be put off until the next day."

"What for, I wonder?"

"He is going out, I believe, to-morrow."

"What of that?"

"Well, he says he wishes to be present when it's done."

"Oh, does he? It will come, next, that nobody must stir hand or foot on the property without his leave. You'll see that, Gaunt."

Gaunt slightly smiled. "He is the son-and-heir, you know, Mr. Rupert."

"We all know that: he takes care we don't forget it. So be it; I do not see that it matters much to us. It has pleased my father to exalt Guy ever since his babyhood, and of course he has grown domineering. Good-night to you, Gaunt."

John Gaunt stood a moment after Rupert left, thinking of his last words. He did not himself much like Guy Pomeroy, and wondered how he should get on with him when he came into power, and whether he should feel inclined then to act as keeper. He and the lord had ever been on the best of terms; almost friends.

"Better not anticipate," thought Gaunt, as he turned in doors.

Sybilla sat at the frugal supper-table, the shawl well wrapped about her shoulders. John Gaunt sat down and helped himself. Sybilla took a morsel upon her plate, and pretended to eat: but it was evident that she had little inclination for it.

"No appetite again, Sybilla?"

Her face flushed. "The heat makes me feel languid, father. And my head has ached to-day."

Nanny, the old serving woman, came in to remove the tray when they had finished. Gaunt rose and took down one of his small stock of books. It was a volume of Virgil—for the man was a man of education.

"I will say good-night, dear father," said Sybilla, advancing to him. "My head will get better in bed."

"Good-night, my dear one," he said, fondly kissing her. "May the holy saints have you in their keeping!"

The first thing Sybilla did upon entering her chamber—a small, pretty room, whose casement looked towards the White House—was to let the cumbersome shawl slip from her shoulders, fall upon her knees before the crucifix that hung opposite her bed, and burst into tears. Tears? Nay; that is hardly the proper word. Sobs, rather. Passionate, grievous sobs; suppressed only lest they should be heard below.

"It is getting more than I can bear," she wailed in a piteous tone. "Who will break it to him?—who will break it to him? My dear, loving, trusting father—who has ever deemed that I and deceit were as far divided as ——"

A very paroxysm of grief broke off the words. After a few moments' yielding to it, Sybilla grew calmer. Folding her hands together, she raised her eyes imploringly to the crucifix, as if seeking for that comfort above, which, as it seemed, she could not find here.

Meanwhile, Rupert Pomeroy, after calling in at Whittaker's—who was the keeper under Gaunt—and on sundry other people, for he made himself at home in the village with high and low, at length reached home. It was late. Jerome met him.

"All in bed?" asked Rupert.

"All but Mr. Guy, sir. He has not gone to his room yet."

"Where is he?"

"In the oak-room, walking about. I'm afraid something has vexed him."

"Why do you fear that?"

"Just hark at his steps, Mr. Rupert. To walk like that is not usual with Mr. Guy."

Rupert paused to listen. Guy's heavy tread sounded from the oak-room, unceasing and monotonous.

"He must be doing penance," remarked Rupert, with a light laugh.

"He has been pacing there these two hours, sir, ever since the lord retired. Just that same sharp, measured tread that you hear now."

"Well, good-night to you, Jerome," returned Rupert, as he went on to his chamber. And he smiled again to himself as he entered it.

"You can't have quite everything your own way, Guy my brother,

although you are the son-and-heir," spoke Rupert, mentally. "Alice Wylde is not for you—and you will do well to make the best and worst of her refusal, and think no more about it."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE KEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

THE state entrance door of the abbey lies on the left as you go in under the great gateway. This admits you to a quaint but, in its way, magnificent hall, from which a fine old staircase winds upwards. A similar entrance-door lies on the right of the *porte-cochère*—if we may borrow a term from the French—leading into a similar hall and to a similar staircase; but at present this other entrance is kept locked, not being used. The Lords of Pomeroy generally use the one first mentioned; and just now there is no second household at the abbey.

Ascending this first-mentioned staircase, which is lined with pictures, you come into a wide corridor, which has a few pictures also hung in it, between the many entrance-doors of the front and back chambers. At the end of the corridor is the south tower: for these rooms are on the right of the entrance gates, looking eastward. It has been already said that the abbey faces the east. As a rule, the rooms are not large; rather, in fact, confined; but dark, ancient, and handsome. The present lord, who keeps up a vast deal of unnecessary state, and whose retainers are numerous, occupies the whole of the front pile, together with a portion of the north wing; but the rooms on the other side the entrance gates have not been much used since the death of the Lady of Pomeroy some years ago, and especially since the lord fell into poor health.

The bed-rooms all face the quadrangle; most of the sitting-rooms face the sea and the open country: and in one of these sitting-rooms, on the morning following the day already mentioned, sits Miss Joan. It is the room next the south tower, is called the "purple room" from the colour of its furniture and hangings, and is the particular sitting-room of Joan. Joan has attended early mass in the chapel, has written some letters, has gone her usual rounds connected with the household, and is now preparing to sit down and sew. Joan Pomeroy is great at embroidery, and she is beginning to "work," as she calls it, a delicate cambric frock for one of Mrs. Capel's children: or, strictly speaking, an expected one. She feels rather more easy on the score of her father's health than she felt yesterday, for the lord got up to breakfast this morning and looked better.

"Can it be twelve o'clock already!" exclaimed Joan, as the great clock of the quadrangle began to ring out mid-day, and various other clocks in the abbey followed suit. "How I must have wasted my time this morning! It was that batch of letters."

Bending her head as the last words left her lips, she regarded her work attentively. A very small portion of it was as yet done.

"But that I have begun it, I would choose the other pattern," she remarked. "It was much less elaborate; it would not have taken more than half the time to work. Suppose I should not get this done in time?—and I have always given the babies their baptismal robe! Perhaps Sybilla can help me. I will send and ask her to stay the day——"

"Mrs. and Miss Wylde," interrupted one of the footmen, as he threw wide open the door.

Joan rose, full of dignity. Truth to say, she had not much liked either Mrs. or Miss Wylde when she made their acquaintance before leaving home. Joan had a prejudice in favour of high lineage—and these ladies did not possess it. It was not the lack of that, however, but something in themselves she remembered she disliked: on the other hand, and Joan was candid enough to admit this, she had seen too little of them to judge fairly. And, if the future lord was to marry the young lady, Joan knew that she ought to put prejudice behind her.

"I *will* like them: I daresay I shall if I try to," passed through her mind as they entered.

"Will Miss Pomeroy pardon this early visit?" began Mrs. Wylde, as she held out her hand. "Between near neighbours—and in a remote country district—mid-day visits are, I believe, allowable. I had, moreover, a special object in coming thus early."

"I am very glad to see you; it is not at all too early," answered Joan, cordially, as she gave them her hand.

"What a lovely pattern!" exclaimed Mrs. Wylde, her eyes falling on the embroidery as she sat down.

"I am pleased to hear you say so. I was rather regretting that I had begun it: it is so intricate, and will take so long."

"But it will be very beautiful when done. It is for an infant's frock?"

"For the little one that my sister, Mrs. Capel, is expecting."

"What a long while you stayed away, Miss Pomeroy!"

"My visits are generally pretty long when I go to her. The children do not like to part with me. But I should have returned before this had I thought papa was so ill."

"Is the lord ill?" cried Mrs. Wylde, quickly.

"He does not acknowledge it, but I am sure he must be. His looks betray it. And it seems to me that he has no spirits left; no energy."

"I have observed that myself," said Mrs. Wylde.

"He has not looked well since the attack of gout," put in Alice, nearly the first words she had spoken. "The Lord of Pomeroy has been very kind to me always; and I hope, I *hope*, he will soon grow strong again."

She spoke with earnestness, laying a stress upon the second "hope." Joan looked at her with a smile, pleased at the expression of feeling. With her dimpled cheeks, her radiant brown eyes, her bright and pure complexion, Alice was indeed beautiful, and Joan did not wonder at Guy's infatuation.

"But I have not explained the object of my coming at this unseemly hour," resumed Mrs. Wylde. "I want to take you back with me to the White House for the day, Miss Pomeroy."

"Oh, thank you; but I—could not go," said Joan, quickly.

"But why?"

"For one thing, papa is so poorly—at least, in appearance—that I do not like to leave him."

"Oh, I hope you will not disappoint us, dear Miss Pomeroy! Look at Alice: how eagerly she is awaiting your consent!"

The pretty blushing face was indeed full of hope as it turned on Joan. It was so pretty, so loving, that Joan could hardly keep her eyes from it; and she began to think that Alice would be a very nice wife indeed for Guy, and to wish to know more of her.

"I will see what papa thinks," she said. "But I had intended to send for Sybilla Gaunt to spend the day here with me."

"Sybilla Gaunt!" Mrs. Wylde was beginning, remonstrance in her eye and on her lip—but Joan was already gone.

The lord was in his own sitting-room; the room next the gateway. His desk stood open on the table before him, and he looked up from his writing as Joan entered.

"Any message for either of the lads—George or Leolin?" asked he, before Joan could speak.

"Are you writing to them, papa?"

"To both of them: giving them a lecture a-piece," he added, with a half-smile.

"Do they need it then, papa?"

"Oh, boys out in the world always need that. It never comes amiss, Joan, be you very sure. I am to give your love, I suppose."

"My very dear love to both. Papa, Mrs. Wylde and her daughter are here. They wish me to go back with them for the day."

"Then go. Go by all means, Joan."

"But I do not like to leave you."

"Not like to leave me! What nonsense! Why, yesterday was the first day you were here for I can't tell how many months: what did I do, do you suppose, without you all that while? Of course you can go. I should wish you to go. Guy would wish it, I am sure. And you don't dine with us, you know, this evening."

Joan returned to the purple room to say she would go. The lord followed her, and stayed with the visitors while Joan made herself ready. As they were departing, Mrs. Wylde expressed a hope that the lord and Mr. Pomeroy would honour her table by joining it at dinner.



"I don't feel quite up to dining from home," replied the lord, shaking his head. "In a day or two, perhaps, I shall be better, and will dine with you then. As to Guy, he goes over to the town to-day, and must be back in time for our own table, for we are expecting a few gentlemen to join it."

The county town, Owlstone, some nine miles distant, was always referred to by Abbeyland as "the town." Mrs. Wylde expressed her regret that neither the lord nor Mr. Pomeroy would honour her that evening; and took her departure.

"What a lovely day it is!" cried Joan, as they stepped out from the large gates.

They began their walk through the village. Joan wore a rich black silk, and (it must be confessed) a very ugly drab bonnet; she was addicted to a sober style of dress and to grave colours. Alice had on white, blue ribbons on her dainty straw hat.

In going along they saw in the distance Guy and Rupert, who were talking with Gaunt. Guy, perhaps not seeing the ladies, started across the path that led round to the stables; walking quickly, as if he were in a hurry. Rupert came towards them. Gaunt came on also with a slower step.

"What a noble looking man he is!" exclaimed Mrs. Wylde involuntarily, alluding to Gaunt. "He would do honour to a lord's coronet."

Joan smiled. "It is said they trace their descent higher than that—to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. In those days, possibly, while a Gaunt was the knight, a Pomeroy was only his esquire."

"Then how is it that the Gaunts have so fallen?" asked Mrs. Wylde.

"We don't really know that they have so fallen; it may be they were never anything but simple gentlepeople," lightly remarked Miss Pomeroy. "None can deny, though, that they ought to be something greater and grander if looks could ensure it."

It was true that Gaunt believed himself to be descended from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, noted in the days of the second Richard: true that he certainly did trace his pedigree very far back. He was a gentleman by descent—meaning of late palpable descent—but was very poor, his income being less than one hundred pounds yearly. He was called in the neighbourhood the "gentleman keeper," for although he was to all intents and purposes the head game-keeper to the Lord of Pomeroy, and performed conscientiously its duties, he accepted no remuneration for it. Except the cottage, which he had rent free. And though not admitted to an equality with the Pomeroy, much more than he would have been were he a regular game-keeper, he and the lord were very friendly with one another. The Lord of Pomeroy respected Gaunt and liked him; both for himself, and also for his alleged high descent: when alone, Gaunt had occasionally been bidden to lunch with him. But the sons,

Guy and Rupert, while showing themselves sufficiently friendly with Gaunt, Rupert especially, were given at times to treat him a little *de haut en bas*, forgetting perhaps that he was not a common keeper.

Gaunt's wife had also been a gentlewoman, though poorer even than himself. She died early, leaving to their only child, Sybilla, the few hundred pounds that she possessed in her own right. Sybilla had been educated at the convent, was an inmate of it for nearly ten years. She shared in all its educational advantages, though of course the same high terms could not be paid with her that were with most of the pupils—such, for example, as with the daughters of the Lord of Pomeroy. Joan patronised Sybilla, who was now three-and-twenty, and really felt a great friendship for her.

Rupert, leaving Gaunt to follow at his leisure, came up with a quick step and glowing face, shaking hands with Mrs. and Miss Wylde in his gay way. Joan walked forward to meet Gaunt. Mrs. Wylde stayed to protect her daughter from the attractive wiles of Rupert, who was already chattering nonsense to her.

The game-keeper took off his hat to Joan as a lord might do, not touching it as a game-keeper. In his heart he probably considered himself pretty equal to the Pomeroy: superior in descent, inferior in position. His manners were good, by nature he was haughty, though he rarely let that appear. Just as the Lord of Pomeroy lorded it over his servants, so did Gaunt lord it over the two keepers under him, so far as exacting strict obedience went. But he was kind and considerate to them; a good and Christian man.

"How is Sybilla?" asked Joan, when her greeting to himself was over.

"She is not well, Miss Pomeroy."

"I am sorry for that. I heard she had a bad headache—but that was yesterday."

"I cannot make her out," observed Gaunt. "She seems to have lost her health and spirits for some weeks past. Her face is quite drawn and thin."

"But what ails her?" questioned Joan.

"It is more than I can tell," replied the keeper, shaking his head. "She thinks it is the summer heat that affects her, but we have had many a summer as hot as this; and in the teeth of her saying it, she is cold, and has to wrap herself up. Her mother went off in a waste," he added, in a low, despairing kind of tone, "and I remember she was always cold, after it set in. If I lose Sybilla —"

Gaunt stopped, overcome. All the sympathy in Joan's nature—and she had a large share of it—was aroused.

"What does Mr. Norris say? Of course you have had him to her."

"No, I have not, Miss Pomeroy. Not yet. Sybilla so strongly objects to it. She says she is quite sure she shall get better more quickly if let alone."

"I will call in and see her," said Joan. "I may spare a minute now, as we go by."

"I wish you would, Miss Joan. And perhaps you will kindly give me your opinion of her afterwards. If you think advice is necessary, I will at once call in Mr. Norris—whether Sybilla consents or not."

"I will. By the way—talking of illness," added Joan—"what do you think of my father? He seems to me to be so much altered. Do you judge him to be ill?"

"I am sure he is altered, Miss Pomeroy, but whether he is really ill is another question. People do alter greatly as they grow in years."

"I know. But papa seems to have altered suddenly."

"No; not suddenly. At least, not very suddenly. The lord has never been the same since his illness in the spring. I alluded to it a week or two ago; I mean, to the change apparent in him; but he passed the subject off with a stiff remark. He never likes to be questioned you know, Miss Joan."

Joan nodded a dismissal, seeing that Mrs. and Miss Wylde were coming on, the former having at length succeeded in getting her daughter away from the light chatter of Rupert. Gaunt bowed, turned away, and put on his hat, which he had kept off during his conversation with Joan. He raised it again in passing the other ladies; who vouchsafed him the merest nod in answer. Mrs. Wylde had never been brought to understand why Gaunt should be regarded as above any ordinary keeper.

They went on through the village, these three ladies, Miss Pomeroy momentarily stopping now and again to greet the cottagers who ran out when they saw her. She was a great favourite with all.

At the extremity of this straggling village—whose houses were mostly built in a straggling fashion instead of consecutively—they came in view of the game-keeper's lodge. Very picturesque it looked to-day, the sunshine flickering upon it through the waving trees, the many-coloured sweet flowers clustering on the grass-plot.

"How hot it is!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Wylde.

"Do you feel it so?" returned Joan. "I was going to ask you to sit down for an instant on the bench while I go in to see Sybilla Gaunt. It is beautifully shady under those trees; it will rest you."

She pointed to the bench in Gaunt's garden. It stood in the shade on the green grass, and looked inviting enough. Mrs. Wylde, however, started back as if she had been struck.

"To see Sybilla Gaunt! My dear Miss Pomeroy!"

"I will not keep you two minutes," said Joan. "I am anxious about her. Her father says she is ill."

"Miss Pomeroy!" repeated Mrs. Wylde, in a tone of strong remonstrance, "you must not go in *there*; to see *her*. You have no mother, my dear, therefore you must excuse my interposing, so far, in the light of one."

Joan Pomeroy, haughty and self-opinionated by nature and by

education, just as all the Pomeroyes were, drew herself up. She had taken Mrs. Wyld's objection in a wrong light. "You do not yet know Sybilla Gaunt, I see, or you would scarcely speak of her disparagingly. She has been exceedingly well brought up; her education has been entirely that of a gentlewoman."

"So I have heard. But no good ever comes of educating girls in her sphere of life; and thus it has proved here. My dear Miss Pomeroy, since you left, the girl has turned out to be—to be—in short, not respectable."

The two ladies stood looking at one another, Joan asking the explanation with her eyes that her lips disdained to utter. Alice traced characters on the dusty road with the end of her parasol and listened, rather amused at the dispute.

"What did you say?" demanded Joan, whose fiery Pomeroy blood was rising.

"My dear, there's no cause for you to put yourself out," said Mrs. Wyld. "It is an every-day affair with village beauties; always has been, and always will be. Sybilla Gaunt is beautiful; but she is no longer respectable, and you must drop all communication with her."

Joan Pomeroy's eyes flashed: she could be nearly as passionate as her eldest brother, when greatly provoked. "It is false, whoever says it," she declared. "How dare my father and my brothers suffer tales to go about to the prejudice of Sybilla Gaunt? They are the lords of the soil, and they ought to have put a stop to them."

Mrs. Wyld gave vent to a short, friendly laugh. "My dear, you will have to abandon your favourable prejudices," she quietly said. "Sybilla Gaunt is not respectable."

"Am I respectable?" returned the angry Joan. "You may as well say that I am not. Sybilla is my friend: she is as much a gentlewoman by descent as I am. I pray you wait for me, for I shall go in to see her."

Allowing no further opposition, Miss Pomeroy walked to the lodge door, and entered without knocking. She was in no frame of mind to heed the polite decorums of life: indeed, they obtained short favour from her at the best of times. The small, but pretty, sitting-room seemed in a litter, and Sybilla sat in it, her head bent on the table. A shawl lay on the ground: it appeared to have slipped from her shoulders.

How like she was to her father this day! Tall and stately; with the same noble features, the same unconscious, lofty air and manner. Certainly she looked a fit descendant for the proud Duke of Lancaster.

With a faint exclamation of dismay, Sybilla sprang up when she saw an intruder, and that it was Miss Pomeroy. Her pale features—not naturally so, but pale, as it appeared, from illness—grew flushed, and she picked up the shawl to throw it on again. In her haste and confusion, she defeated her own object, and the shawl

somehow lighted on her head. In stretching up her arms to right it, Joan Pomeroy gazed at her with a keen gaze ; and Joan Pomeroy fell back against the inner door, and her spirit turned faint within her.

Joan did not speak ; she only looked at her. Sybilla's trembling hands busied themselves in adjusting the shawl, and the transient crimson of her face faded to a death-like whiteness.

"What is this ?" asked Joan, at length.

"What is—what ?" returned Sybilla, a terrible trouble shining in the depth of her dark violet eyes.

"I met your father, and he told me you were ill," harshly repeated Joan. "*What* is this illness, I ask ?"

"Don't frighten me, Miss Pomeroy," gasped Sybilla, who looked ready to faint.

"Answer me, I say," repeated Joan, her face as stern, at that moment, as her brother Guy's.

Sybilla choked down a gasping breath before she could answer, and when she did speak, it was in a faint, nervous tone, and in broken sentences. "The heat this summer—has been great—it has made me ill—it has overpowered me."

Joan Pomeroy heard her to an end, bending her stern, searching eyes upon her. "It is the heat that overpowers you ? The heat, you say ? Then why do you wear a shawl to increase it ?" And Sybilla Gaunt only laid her hand upon her heart, as if to still its beating, and made no reply, for she had none to make. Miss Pomeroy stepped close up to her.

"Do you think you can deceive me ? No : though you have succeeded, it would appear, in deceiving your father. You have been mad, Sybilla Gaunt ; mad. You have degraded yourself——"

"Do not say too much, Miss Pomeroy," interrupted Sybilla, in a low tone. "You don't know all."

"I know and see sufficient. I know that the truth is whispered outside, and that I was warned not to subject myself to contact with you. Shame upon you ! You, who were the stay of your father ! you, who have boasted of a descent from the Plantagenets ! you who were reared to be a gentlewoman ! Sybilla Gaunt, I would as soon have believed ill of myself as of you."

Miss Pomeroy gathered up her petticoats, as if to guard them against contamination with the door-sill, and swept out. It was her one great failing—hot, hasty passion : in that, she and Guy were alike : but she had rarely been so excited as now.

Mrs. Wylde was resting on the bench, and Alice stood outside, in the road. Mrs. Wylde rose when she saw Miss Pomeroy, and hastened to get into the road also, as if the very grass-plot at Gaunt's burnt her feet.

"Come, Alice, what are you looking at ? Oh, I see ; Mr. Guy Pomeroy is there."

Joan turned her head. Guy was on horseback, branching off to-

wards Owlstone. Gaunt was now coming in the direction of his cottage.

"Let us get on," muttered Joan. "I do not want to see him."

"Well, my dear Miss Pomeroy, are you satisfied?" asked Mrs. Wylde.

"Quite," returned Joan, her voice taking a harsh tone in her bitter distress.

"Of course; there is no possibility of mistaking it. And her father is a—in fact, an idiot."

"Who is it that has—has brought the trouble to the house?" interrupted Joan, in the same abrupt tone, telling so surely of affliction.

"There I cannot enlighten you," replied Mrs. Wylde. "She has always, as I hear, held herself aloof from the village rustics."

"*Held herself aloof from the village rustics!*" echoed Joan Pomeroy, with angry emphasis—angry, even then, that Sybilla could be so mistaken. "I tell you, Sybilla is a gentlewoman, with—hitherto—all a gentlewoman's instincts."

Mrs. Wylde coughed. Alice broke into a sudden exclamation, perhaps to drown its mocking sound.

"How very beautiful she is!"

"Who, child?"

"Sybilla Gaunt, mamma."

"Oh," said Mrs. Wylde, scornfully. "A homely saying my old mother sometimes used is a very true one. 'Handsome is as handsome does.' Sybilla Gaunt had better have been born ugly enough to frighten the crows."

*(To be continued.)*





## CAROMEL'S FARM.

**Y**OU will be slow to believe what I am about to write, and say it savours of romance instead of reality. Every word of it is true. Here truth was stranger than fiction.

Lying midway between our house, Dyke Manor, and Church Dykely, was a substantial farm belonging to the Caromels. It stood well back from the road, a quarter of a mile or so, and was nearly hidden by the trees that surrounded it. An avenue led to the house; a rambling, spacious, very old-fashioned building, so full of queer angles inside, nooks and corners and passages, that you might lose your way in them and never find it again. The Caromels were gentlemen by descent, but their means had dwindled with years, so that they had little left besides this property. The last Caromel who died, generally distinguished as "Old Caromel" by all the parish, left two sons, Miles and Nash. The property was willed to the elder, Miles: but Nash continued to have his home with him. As to the house, it had no particular name, but was familiarly called "Caromel's Farm."

Squire Todhetley had been always intimate with them; more like a brother than anything else. Not but that he was considerably their senior. I think he liked Nash the best: he was so yielding and easy. Some said Nash was not very steady in private life, and that his brother, stern and moral, read him a lecture twice a week. But whether it was so nobody knew; people don't go prying into their neighbours' houses to seek out the holes in their coats.

At the time I am beginning to tell of, old Caromel had been dead about ten years; Nash was now five-and-thirty, Miles forty. Miles had married a lady with a good fortune, which was settled upon herself and her children; the four of them were girls, and there was no son.

At the other end of Church Dykely, ever so far past Chavasse Grange, lived a widow lady named Tinkle. And when the world had quite done wondering whether Nash Caromel meant to marry (though, indeed, what had he to marry upon?), it was suddenly found out that he wanted Mrs. Tinkle's daughter, Charlotte. The Tinkles were respectable people, but not equal to the Caromels. Mrs. Tinkle and her son farmed a little land, she had also a small private income. The son had married well: but just now he was away; having gone abroad with his wife, whose health was failing.

Charlotte Tinkle was getting towards thirty. You would not have thought it, to look at her. She had a gentle face, a gentle voice, and a young, slender figure; her light brown hair was always

neat; and she possessed one of those inoffensive natures that would like to be at peace with the whole world. It was natural that Mrs. Tinkle should wish her daughter to marry if anybody suitable presented himself—all mothers do, I suppose—but to find it was Nash Caromel took her aback.

"You think it will not do," observed the Squire, when Mrs. Tinkle was enlarging on the grievance to him one day that they met in the two-acre field.

"How can it do?" returned poor Mrs. Tinkle, in a tone between wailing and crying. "Nash Caromel has nothing to keep her on, sir, and no prospects."

"That's true," said the Pater. "At present. He has thoughts, I hear, of taking a farm."

"But he has no money to stock a farm. And look at that tale, sir, that was talked of—about that Jenny Lake. Other things have been said also."

"Oh, one must not believe all one hears. For myself, I assure you, Mrs. Tinkle, I know no harm of Nash. As to the money to stock a farm, I expect his brother could help him to it, if he chose."

"But, sir, you would surely not advise them to marry upon an uncertainty!"

"I don't advise them to marry at all; understand that, my good lady; I think it would be the height of imprudence. But I can't prevent it."

"Mr. Todhetley," she answered, a tear dropping down her thin cheeks, on which there was a chronic redness, "I am unable to describe to you how much my mind is set against the match: I seem to foresee that no good would ever come of it; nothing but misery for Charlotte. And she has had so peaceful a home all her life."

"Tell Charlotte she can't have him—if you think so strongly about it."

"She won't listen—at least to any purpose," groaned Mrs. Tinkle. "When I talk to her, she says, 'Yes, dear mother; no, dear mother,' in her dutiful way: and the same evening she'll be listening to Nash Caromel's courting words. Her Uncle Tinkle rode over from Inkberrow to talk to her, for I wrote to him: but it seems to have made no impression on her in the long run. What I am afraid of is, that Nash Caromel will marry her in spite of us."

"I should like to see my children marry in spite of me!" cried the Squire, giving way to one of his heats. "I'd 'marry' them. Nash can't take her against her will, my dear friend: it takes two people, you know, to complete a bargain of that sort. Promise Charlotte to shake her unless she listens to reason. Why should she not listen? She is meek and tractable."

"She always has been. But, once let a girl be enthralled by a sweetheart, there's no answering for her. Duty to parents is often forgotten then."

"If——Why, mercy upon us, there *is* Charlotte!" broke off the Pater, happening to lift his eyes to the stile. "And Nash too."

Yes, there they were : standing on the other side the stile in the cross-way path, having met accidentally. "Halloa!" called out the Squire.

"I can't stay a moment," said Nash Caromel, turning his good-looking face to speak : and it cannot be denied it was a good-looking face, or that he was an attractive man. "Miles has sent me to that cattle sale up yonder, and I am full late."

With a smile and a nod, he stepped lightly onwards, his slender, supple figure, of middle height, upright as a dart ; his fair hair waving in the breeze. Charlotte Tinkle glanced shyly after him, her cheeks blushing like a peony.

"What's this I hear, young lady?—that you and Mr. Nash yonder want to make a match of it, in spite of pastors and masters!" began the Squire. "Is it true?"

Charlotte stood like a goose, making marks on the dusty path with the end of her large grass-green parasol. Parasols were made for use then, not show.

"Nash has nothing, you know," went on the Pater. "No money, no land, no house, no anything. There'd not be common sense in it, Charlotte."

"I tell him so, sir," answered Charlotte, lifting her shy brown eyes for a moment.

"To be sure ; that's right. Here's your mother fretting herself into fiddlestrings for fear of——of—I hardly know what."

"Lest you should be tempted to forget your duty to me, Lottie," struck in the mother. "Ah, my dear ! you young people little think what trouble and anxiety you bring upon us."

Charlotte Tinkle suddenly burst into tears, to the surprise of her beholders. Drying them up as soon as she could, she spoke with a sigh.

"I hope I shall never bring trouble upon you, mother, never ; I'd not do it willingly for the world. But ——"

"But what, child ?" cried the mother, for Charlotte had come to a standstill.

"I—I am afraid that parents and children see with different eyes——just as though things wore for each a totally opposite aspect. The difficulty is, how to reconcile that view and this."

"And do you know what my father used to say to me in my young days?" put in the Squire. "'Young folks think old folks fools, but old folks know the young ones to be so.' There was never a truer saying than that, Miss Charlotte."

Miss Charlotte only sighed in answer. The wind, high that day, was taking her muslin petticoats, and she had some ado to keep them down. Mrs. Tinkle got over the stile, and the Squire turned back towards home.

A fortnight or so had gone by when Church Dykely awoke one morning to an electric shock : Nash Caromel and Charlotte had gone and got married. They did it without the consent of (as the Squire had put it) pastors and masters. Nash had none to consult, for he could not be expected to yield obedience to his brother ; and Charlotte had asked Mrs. Tinkle, and Mrs. Tinkle had refused to countenance the ceremony, though she did not actually walk into the church to forbid it.

Taking a three weeks' trip by way of honeymoon, the bride and bridegroom came back to Church Dykely. Caromel's Farm refused to take them in ; and Miles Caromel, indignant to a degree, told his brother that "as he had made his bed, so must he lie upon it," which is a very convenient reproach, and often used.

"Nash is worse than a child," grumbled Miles to the Squire, his tones harder than usual, and his manner colder. "He has gone and married this young woman—who is not his equal—and now he has no home to give her. Did he suppose that we should receive him back here?—and her as well? He has acted like an idiot."

"Mrs. Tinkle will not have anything to do with them," returned the Pater : "and Tinkle, of Inkberrow, is furious."

"Tinkle of Inkberrow's no fool. Being a man of substance, he thinks they may be falling back upon him."

Which was the precise fear that lay upon Miles himself. Meanwhile Nash engaged sumptuous lodgings (if such a word could be justly applied to any rooms at Church Dykely), and drove his wife out daily in the pony gig that was always looked upon as his at Caromel's Farm.

Nash was flush of money now, for he had saved some ; but he could not go on living upon it for ever. After sundry interviews with his brother, Miles agreed to hand him over a thousand pounds : not at all too large a sum, considering that Nash had given him his services, such as they were, for a number of years for just his keep as a gentleman and a bonus for pocket money. A thousand pounds would not go far with such a farm as Nash had been used to and would like to take, and he resolved to emigrate to America.

Mrs. Tinkle (the Squire called her simple at times) was nearly wild when she heard of it. It brought her out of her temper with a leap. Condoning the rebellious marriage, she went off to remonstrate with Nash.

"But now, why need you put yourself into this unhappy state?" asked Nash, when he had heard what she had to say. "Dear Mrs. Tinkle, do admit some common sense into your mind. I am not taking Charlotte to the 'other end of the world,' as you put it, but to America. It is only a few days' passage. Outlandish foreigners ! Not a bit of it. The people there are, so to speak, our own countrymen. Their language is ours ; their laws are, I believe, much as ours are."

"You may as well be millions of miles away, practically speaking," bewailed Mrs. Tinkle. "Charlotte will be as much lost to me there as she would be at the North Pole. She is my only daughter, Nash Caromel, and has never been away from me: to part with her will be like parting with life."

"I am very sorry," said poor Nash, who was like a woman when any appeal was made to his feelings. "Live with you? No, that would not do: but, thank you all the same for offering it. Nothing would induce me to sponge upon you in that way: and were I capable of it, your son Henry would speedily turn us out when he returned. I must get a home of my own, for Charlotte's sake as well as for mine: and I know I can do that in America. Land, there, may be had for an old song; fortunes are made in no time. The probability is that before half-a-dozen years have gone over our heads, I shall bring you Charlotte home a rich woman, and we shall settle down here for life."

There's no space to pursue the arguments—which lasted for a week or two. But they brought forth no result. Nash might have turned a post sooner than the opinions of Mrs. Tinkle, and she might as well have tried to turn the sun as to stop his emigrating. The parish looked upon it as not at all a bad scheme. Nash might get on well over there if he would put off his besetting sin, easy indolence, and not allow the Yankees to take him in.

So Nash Caromel and Charlotte his wife set sail for New York; Mrs. Tinkle bitterly resenting the step, and wholly refusing to be reconciled.

## II.

About five years went by. Henry Tinkle's wife had died, leaving him a little girl, and he was back with the child at his mother's: but that has nothing to do with us. A letter came from the travellers now and then, but not often, during the first three years. Nash wrote to Caromel's Farm; Charlotte to the parson's wife, Mrs. Holland, with whom she had been very friendly. But none of the letters gave much information as to personal matters; they were chiefly filled with descriptions of the new country, its modes and customs, and especially its mosquitoes, which at first nearly drove Mrs. Nash Caromel mad. It was gathered that Nash *did not prosper*. They seemed to move about much from place to place, making New York a kind of standing point, to return to occasionally. For the past two years no letters at all had come, and it was questioned whether poor Nash and his wife had not dropped out of the world.

In the midst of this uncertainty, Miles Caromel, who had been seriously ailing for some months, died. And to Nash, if he were still in existence, lapsed the Caromel property.

Old Mr. Caromel's will had been a curious one. He bequeathed Caromel Farm, with all its belongings, the live-stock, the standing ricks, the crops, the furniture, and all else that might be in or upon it, to his son Miles, and to Miles's eldest son after him. If Miles left no son, then it was to go to Nash (with all that might then be upon it, just as before), and so on to Nash's son. But if neither of them had a son, and Nash died during Miles's lifetime—in short, if there was no male inheritor living, then Miles could dispose of the property as he pleased. As could Nash under similar circumstances.

The result of this odd will was, that Nash, if alive, came into the farm and to all that was upon it. If Nash had, or should have, a son, it must descend to that son; if he had not, the property was his absolutely. But it was not known whether Nash was alive; and in the uncertainty Miles made a will conditionally, bequeathing it to his wife and daughters. It was said that the possessing no son had long been a standing thorn in the shoes of Miles Caromel; that he had prayed for one, summer and winter.

But now, who was to find Nash? How could the executors let him know of his good luck? The Squire, who was one of them, talked of nothing else. A letter was despatched to Nash's agents in New York, Abraham B. Whitter and Co., and no more could be done.

In a shorter time than you would have supposed possible, Nash arrived. He chanced to be at these same agents' house when the letter got there, and came off at full speed. So the will made by Miles went for nothing. Nash was a good bit altered—looked thinner and older: but he was evidently just as easy and persuadable as he used to be: people often wondered whether Nash had ever said No in his whole life. He did not tell us much about himself, only that he had roamed over the world, hither and thither, from country to country, and had been lately for some time in California. Charlotte was at San Francisco. When Nash took ship from thence for New York, she was not well enough to undertake the voyage, and had to stay behind. Mrs. Tinkle, who had had time, and to spare, to get over her anger, went into a fine way at this last item of news; and she caught up the notion that Charlotte was dead. For which she had no grounds.

Charlotte had no children; had not had any; consequently, there was every probability that Caromel's Farm would be Nash's absolutely, to will away as he should please. He found Mrs. Caromel (his brother's widow) and her daughters in it: they had not bestirred themselves to look out for another residence. Being very well off, Mrs. Caromel having had several substantial windfalls in the shape of legacies from rich uncles and aunts, they professed to be glad that Nash should have the property—whatever they might have privately felt. Nash, out of a good-natured wish not to disturb them too soon, bade them choose their own time for moving, and took up his abode at Nave, the lawyer's.



There are lawyers and lawyers. I am a great deal older now than I was when these events were enacted, and have gained my share of worldly wisdom; and I, Johnny Ludlow, say that there are good and honest lawyers in the world as well as bad and dishonest. My experience has lain more amidst the former class than the latter. Though I have, to my cost, been brought into contact with one or two bad ones in my time; fearful rogues.

One of these was Andrew Nave, recently of Church Dykely. His name might have had a "K" prefixed, and been all the better for it. Of fair show outside, indeed rather a good-looking man, he was not fair within. He managed to hold his own in the parish estimation, as a rule: it was only when some crafty deed or other struggled to the surface that people would say, "What a sharper that man is!"

The family lawyer of the Caromels, Crow, of Evesham, chanced to be ill at this time, and away for change of air, and Nave rushed up to greet Nash on his return, and to offer his services. And the fellow was so warm and hearty, so fair-speaking, so much the gentleman, that easy Nash, who knew nothing of the man, bad or good, clasped the hand held out to him, and promised Knave his patronage forthwith. If I've made a mistake in spelling the name, it can go.

To begin with, Nave took him home. He lived a door or two past Duffham's: a nice house, well kept up in paint. Some five years before, the sleepy old lawyer, Wilkinson, died in that house, and Nave came down from London and took to the concern. Nave thought that he was doing a first-rate stroke of business by securing Nash Caromel as an inmate, the solicitorship to the Caromel property being worth trying for; though he might not have been so eager to admit Nash had he foreseen all that was to come of it.

Not caring to trouble Mrs. Caromel with his company, Nash accepted Nave's hospitality; but, liking to be independent, he insisted upon paying for it, and mentioned a handsome weekly sum. Nave made a show of resistance—which was all put on, for he was as fond of shillings as he was of pounds—and then gave in. So Nash, feeling free, stayed on at his ease.

When Nave had first come to settle at Church Dykely with his daughter Charlotte, he was taken for a widower. It turned out, however, that there was a Mrs. Nave living somewhere with the rest of the children, she and her husband having agreed to what was called an amicable separation, for their tempers did not agree. This eldest daughter, Charlotte, a gay, dashing girl of two-and-twenty then, was the only creature in the world, it was said, for whom Nave cared.

Mrs. Caromel did not appear to find readily a place to her liking. People are particular when about to purchase a residence. She made repeated apologies to Nash for keeping him out of his home, but he assured her that he was in no hurry to leave his present quarters.

And that was true. For Charlotte Nave was casting her glamour over him. She liked to cast that over men; and tales had gone about respecting her. Nothing very tangible: and perhaps they would not have held water. She was a little, fair, dashing woman, swaying about her flounces as she walked, with a great heap of beautiful hair, bright as gold. Her blue eyes had a way of looking into yours rather too freely, and her voice was soft as a summer's wind. A dangerous companion.

Well, they fell in love with one another, as was said; she and Nash. Nash forgot his wife, and she her old lovers. Being now on the road to her twenty-eighth year, she had had her share of them. Once she had been absent for two weeks, and Church Dykely somehow got up the idea that she and one of her lovers (a young gentleman who was reading law with Nave) were taking a fraternal tour together as far as London to see the lions. But it turned out to be a mistake, and nobody laughed at the notion more than Charlotte. She wished she had been on a tour—and seeing lions, she said, instead of moping away the whole two weeks at her aunt's, who had a perpetual asthma, and lived in a damp old house at Chelsea.

The weeks went on. Autumn weather came in. Mrs. Caromel found a place to suit her at Kempsey—one of the prettiest of the villages that lie under the wing of Worcester. She bought it; and removed to it with her private goods and chattels. Nash, even now, made no haste to quit the lawyer's house for his own. Some said it was he who could not tear himself away from Charlotte; others said Miss Charlotte would not let him go; that she held him fast by a silken cord. Anyhow, they were always together, out of doors and in; she seemed to like to parade their friendship before the world, as some girls like to lead about a pet monkey. Perhaps Nash first took to her from her name being the same as his wife's.

One day Nash walked over to the Manor and had a long talk in private with the Squire. He wanted to borrow twelve hundred pounds. No ready money had come to him from his brother, and it was not a favourable time for selling produce. The Squire cheerfully agreed to lend it him: there was no risk.

"But I'd counsel you to remember one thing, Nash Caromel—that you have a wife," said he, as they came out of the room when Nash was going away. "It's time you left off dallying with that other young woman."

Nash laughed a laugh that had an uneasy sound in it. "It is nothing, Todhetley."

"Glad to hear you say so," said the Pater. "She has the reputation of being a dangerous flirt. *You* are not the first man she has entangled, if all tales be true. Get out of Nave's house and into your own."

"I will," acquiesced Nash.

Perhaps that was easier said than done. It happened that the

same evening I overheard a few words pass between the lawyer and Nash. They were not obliged to apply to Miss Nave: but, the chances were that they did.

The Squire sent me to Nave's, when dinner was over, to take a note to Nash. Nave's smart waiting-maid, in a muslin apron and cherry cap-strings, was standing at the door talking and laughing with some young man, under cover of the twilight. She was as fond of finery as her mistress; perhaps as fond of sweethearts.

"Mr. Caromel? Yes, sir, he is at home. Please to walk in."

Showing me to a sitting-room on the left-hand side of the passage—the lawyer's offices were on the right—she shut me in, and went, as I supposed, to tell Caromel. At the back of this room was the dining-room. I heard the rattle of glasses on the table through the unlatched folding doors, and next the rattle of voices. The lawyer and Nash were sitting over their wine.

"You must marry her," said Nave, concisely.

"I wish I could," returned Nash; and his wavering, irresolute tone was just a contrast to the other's keen one. "I want to. But how can I? I'm heartily sorry."

"And as soon as may be. *You must.* Attentions paid to young ladies cannot be allowed to end in smoke. And you will find her thousand pounds useful."

"But how *can* I, I say?" cried Nash ruefully. "You know how impracticable it is—the impediment that exists."

"Stuff and nonsense, Caromel! Where there's a will there's a way. Impediments only exist to be got over."

"It would take a cunning man to get over the one that lies between me and her. I assure you, and you may know I say it in all good faith, that I should ask nothing better than to be a free man to-morrow—for this one sole cause."

"Leave things to me. For all you know, you are free now."

The opening of their door by the maid, who had taken her own time to do it, and the announcement that I waited to see Mr. Caromel, stopped the rest. Nash came in, and I gave him the note.

"Wants to see me before twelve to-morrow, does he?—something he forgot to say," cried he, running his eyes over it. "Tell the Squire I will be there, Johnny."

Caromel was very busy after that, getting into his house—for he took the Squire's advice, and did not linger much longer at Nave's. And I think two or three weeks only had passed, after he was in it, when news reached him of his wife's death.

It came from his agent in New York, Abraham B. Whitter, who had received the information from San Francisco. Mr. Whitter enclosed the San Francisco letters; one written to himself, the other (which was as yet not unsealed) to Nash Caromel.

We read them both: Nash brought them to the Squire before sending them to Mrs. Tinkle—considerate as ever, he would not let

her see them until she had been prepared. The letters did not say much. Mrs. Nash Caromel had grown weaker and weaker after Nash departed from San Francisco for New York, and finally sunk under low fever. A diary which she had kept the last few weeks of her life, meant only for his own eye, together with a few letters and sundry other personal trifles, would be forwarded the first opportunity to Abraham B. Whitter and Co., who would hold the box at Mr. Caromel's disposal.

"Who is he, this Francis Munn that writes to you?" asked the Squire. "A friend of your wife's?—she appears to have died at his house."

"A true friend of hers and of mine," answered Nash. "It was with Mr. and Mrs. Munn that I left Charlotte, when I was obliged to go to New York. She was not well enough to travel with me."

"Well—look here, Caromel—don't go and marry that other Charlotte," advised the Squire. "She is as different from your wife as chalk is from cheese. Poor thing! it was a hard fate—dying over there away from everybody!"

But now—would anybody believe it?—instead of taking the Squire's advice and not marrying her at all, instead even of allowing a decent time to elapse, in less than a week Nash went to church with Charlotte the Second. Shame, said Parson Holland under his breath; shame, said the parish aloud: but Nash Caromel heeded them not.

We only knew it was to be, the day before the wedding. On Wednesday morning, a fine, crisp, October day, a shooting party was to meet at old Appleton's, who lived over beyond Church Dykely. The Squire and Tod started for it after an early breakfast, and they let me go part of the way with them. Just after passing Caromel's Farm, we met Pettipher the postman.

"Anything for the Manor?" asked the Pater.

"Yes, sir," answered the man; and, diving into his bundle, he handed a letter.

"This is not mine," said the Squire, looking at the address; "this is for Mr. Caromel."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, sir; I took out the wrong letter. This is yours."

"What a thin letter!—come from foreign parts," remarked the Pater, reading the address, "Nash Caromel, Esq." "I seem to know the handwriting: fancy I've seen it before. Here, take it, Pettipher."

In passing the letter to Pettipher, I looked at the said writing. Very small, poor writing indeed, with long angular tails to the letters up and down, especially the capitals. The Squire handed me his gun and was turning to walk on, opening his letter as he did so; when Pettipher spoke and arrested him.

"Have you heard what's coming off yonder, to-morrow, sir?" asked he, pointing with his thumb to Caromel's Farm.

"Why no," said the Squire, wondering what Pettipher meant to be at. "What should be coming off?"

"Mr. Caromel's going to bring a wife home. Leastways, going to get married."

"I don't believe it," burst forth the Pater, after staring angrily at the man. "You'd better take care what you say, Pettipher."

"But it's true, sir," reasoned Pettipher, "though it's not generally known. My niece is apprentice to Mrs. King the dressmaker, as perhaps you know, sir, and they are making Miss Nave's wedding-dress and bonnet. They are to be married quite early, sir, nine o'clock, before folks are about. Well yes, sir, it is not seemly, seeing he has but now heard of his wife's death, poor Miss Charlotte Tinkle, that grew up among us—but you'll find it's true."

Whether the Squire gave more hot words to Nash Caromel, or to Charlotte the Second, or to Pettipher for telling it, I can't say now. Pettipher touched his hat, said good morning, and turned up the avenue to Caromel's Farm, to leave the letter for Nash.

And, married they were on the following morning, amidst a score or two of spectators. What was agate had slipped out to others as well as ourselves. Old Clerk Bumford looked more angry than a raven when he saw us flocking into the church, after Nash had fee'd him to keep it quiet.

As the clock struck nine, the party came. The bride and one of her sisters, both in white silk; Nave and some strange gentleman, who might be a friend of his; and Caromel, paler than a ghost. Charlotte the Second was pale too, but uncommonly pretty, her mass of beautiful hair shining like silken threads of gold.

The ceremony over, they filed out into the porch; Nash leading his bride, and Nave bringing up the rear alone; when an anxious-looking little woman with a chronic redness of face was seen coming across the churchyard. It was Mrs. Tinkle, wearing the deep mourning she had put on for Charlotte. Somebody had carried her the tidings, and she had come running forth to see whether they *could* be true.

And, to watch her, poor thing, with her scared face raised to Nash, and her poor hands clasped in pain, as he and his bride passed her on the pathway, was something sad. Nash Caromel's face had grown white again; but he never looked at her, or turned his eyes, fixed straight out before him, a hair's point to the right or left.

"May heaven have mercy upon them—for surely they'll need it!" cried the poor woman. "No luck can come of such a wedding as this."

### III.

The months went on. Mrs. Nash was ruling the roast at Caromel's Farm, being unquestionably both mistress and master. Nash Caromel's old easy indolence had grown now to apathy. It almost seemed as

though the farm might go as it liked for him ; but his wife was energetic, and she kept servants of all kinds to their work.

Nash excused himself for his hasty wedding when people reproached him—and a few had done that on his return from the honeymoon. His first wife had been dead for some months, he said, and the farm wanted a mistress. She had only been dead to him a week, was the answer he got to this : and, as to the farm, he was quite as competent to manage that himself without a mistress as with one. After all, where was the use of bothering about it when the thing was done ?—and the offence concerned himself, not his neighbours. So the matter was condoned at length ; Nash was taken into favour again, and the past dropped.

But Nash, as I have told you, grew apathetical. His spirits were low ; the Squire remarked one day that he was like a man who had some inward care upon him. Mrs. Nash, on the contrary, was cheerful as a summer's day ; she filled the farm with visitors, and made the money fly.

All too soon, a baby arrived. It was in May, and he must have travelled at railroad speed. Nurse Picher, called in hastily on the occasion, could not find anything the matter with him. A beautiful boy, she said, as like his father, Master Nash (she had known Nash as a boy), as one pea was like another. Mrs. Nash told a tale of having been run after by a cow ; Duffham, when attacked by the parish on the point, shut his lips, and would say never a word, good or bad. Anyway, here he was ; a fine little boy and the son-and-heir : and if he had mistaken the proper time to appear, why clearly it must be his own fault or the cow's : other people were not to be blamed for it. Mrs. Nash Caromel, frantic with delight at its being a boy, sent an order to old Bumford to set the bells a ringing.

But now, it was a singular thing that the Squire should chance to be present at the delivery of another of those letters that bore the handwriting with the angular tails. Not but that very singular coincidences do take place in this life, and I often think it would not hurt us if we paid more heed to them. Caromel's Farm was getting rather behindhand with its payments. Whether through its master's apathy, or its mistress's extravagance, ready money grew inconveniently short, and the Squire could not get his interest paid on the twelve hundred pounds.

"I'll go over and jog his memory," said he one morning, as we got up from breakfast. "Put on your cap, Johnny."

There was a pathway to Caromel's across the fields, and that was the way we took. It was a hot, lovely day, early in July. Some wheat on the Caromel land was already down.

"Splendid weather it has been for the corn," cried the Squire, turning himself about, "and we shall have a splendid harvest. Somehow I always fancy the crops ripen on this land sooner than on any other about here, Johnny."



"So they do, sir."

"Fine rich land it is: shouldn't grumble if it were mine. We'll go in at this gate, lad."

"This gate" was the side gate. It opened on a path that led direct to the sitting-room with glass doors. Nash was standing just inside the room, and of all the uncomfortable expressions that can sit on a man's face, the worst sat on his. The Squire noticed it, and spoke in a whisper.

"Johnny lad, he looks just as though he had seen a ghost."

It's just what he did look like—a ghost that frightened him. We were close up before he noticed us. Giving a great start, he smoothed his face, smiled, and held out his hand.

"You don't look well," said the Squire, as he sat down. "What's amiss?"

"Nothing at all," answered Nash. "The heat bothers me, as usual: can't sleep at nights for it. Why, here's the postman! What makes him so late, I wonder?"

Pettipher was coming straight down to the window, the letters in his hand. Something in his free, onward step seemed to tell that he must be in the habit of delivering the letters to Nash at that same window.

"Two, sir, this morning," said Pettipher, handing them in.

As Nash was taking the letters, one of them fell, either by his own awkwardness or by Pettipher's. I picked it up and gave it to him, address upwards. The Squire saw it.

"Why, that's the same handwriting that puzzled me," cried he, speaking on the impulse of the moment. "It seemed familiar to me, but I could not remember where I had seen it. It's a foreign letter."

Nash laughed—a lame kind of laugh—and put both letters into his pocket. "It comes from a chum of mine that I picked up over yonder," said he to the Squire, nodding his head towards where the sea might be supposed to lie. "I don't think you could ever have been familiar with it."

They went away to talk of business, leaving me alone. Mrs. Nash Caromel came in with her baby. She wore a white dress and light green ribbons, a lace cap half shading her bright hair. Uncommonly pretty she looked—but I did not like her.

"Is it you, Johnny Ludlow?" said she, pausing a moment at the door, and then holding out her hand. "I thought my husband was here alone."

"He is gone into the library with the Squire."

"Sit down. Have you seen my baby before? Is he not a beauty?"

It was a nice little fellow, with fat arms and blue knitted shoes, a good deal like Nash. They had named him Duncan, after some relative of hers, and the result was that he was never called anything but "Dun." Mrs. Caromel was telling me that she had

"short-coated" him early, as it was hot weather, when the others appeared, and the Squire marched me off.

"Johnny," said he, thoughtfully, as we went along, "how curiously Nash Caromel is altered!"

"He seems rather—*down*, sir," I answered, hesitating for a word.

"Down!" echoed the Squire, slightly; "it's more than that. He seems lost."

"Lost, sir?"

"His mind does. When I told him what I had come about—that it was time, and long ago, too, that my interest was paid, he stared at me more like a lunatic than a farmer—as if he had forgotten all about it, interest, and money, and all. When his wits came to him, he said it ought to have been paid, and he'd see Nave about it. Nave's his father-in-law, Johnny, and I suppose will take care of his interests; but I know I'd as soon entrust my affairs to Old Scratch as to him."

The Squire got his interest paid. The next news we heard was that Caromel's Farm was about to give an entertainment on a grand scale: an afternoon fête out of doors, with a sumptuous cold collation that you might call by what name you liked—dinner, tea, or supper—in the evening. An invitation printed on a square card came to us, which we all crowded round the Mater to look at—cards had not come much into fashion then, except for public ceremonies, such as the Mayor's Feast at Worcester. In our part of the world we were still content to write our invitations on note-paper.

The Mater would not go. She did not care for fêtes, she said to us. In point of fact she did not like Mrs. Nash Caromel any better than she had liked Charlotte Nave, and she had never believed in the cow. So she sent a civil note of excuse for herself. The Squire accepted, after some hesitation. He and the Caromels had been friends for so many years that he did not care to put the slight of a refusal upon Nash; besides, he liked parties if they were jolly.

But now, would any rational being believe that Madam Nash had the cheek to send an invitation to Mrs. Tinkle and her son Henry? It was what Harry Tinkle called it—cheek. When poor Mrs. Tinkle broke the red seal of the huge envelope, and read the card of invitation, from Mr. and Mrs. Caromel, her eyes were dim.

"I think they must have sent it as a cruel joke," remarked Mrs. Tinkle, meeting the Squire a day or two before the fête. "She has never spoken to me in her life. When we pass each other she picks up her skirts as if they were too good to touch mine. Once she laughed at me rudely."

"Don't believe she knows any better," cried the Squire in his hot partisanship. "Her skirts were not fit to touch your own Charlotte's."

"Oh, Charlotte! poor Charlotte!" cried Mrs. Tinkle, losing her balance of equanimity. "I wish I could hear the particulars of her last moments," she went on, brushing away the tears. "If

Mr. Caromel has had details—and that letter, telling of her death, promised them, you know—he does not disclose them to me.”

“Why don’t you write a note and ask him, Mrs. Tinkle?”

“I hardly know why,” she answered. “I think he cannot have heard, or he would surely tell me; he is not bad hearted.”

“No, only too easy; swayed by anybody that may be at his elbow for the time being,” concluded the Squire. “Nash Caromel is one of those people who need to be kept in leading-strings all their lives. Good morning.”

It was a fête worth going to. The afternoon as sunshiny a one as ever August turned out, and the company gay, if not numerous. Only a sprinkling of ladies could be seen: but amongst them was Miles Caromel’s widow, with her four daughters. Being women of consideration, deserving the respect of the world, they went for much, and Mrs. Nash had cause to thank them. They showed countenance to her for the sake of the honour of the Caromels.

Archery, dancing, promenading, and talking took up the afternoon, and then came the banquet. Altogether it must have cost Caromel’s Farm a tidy sum.

“It is well for you to be able to afford this,” cried the Squire confidentially to Nash, as they stood together in one of the shady paths beyond the light of the coloured lanterns, when the evening was drawing to an end. “Miles would never have done it.”

“Oh, I don’t know—it’s no harm once in a way,” answered Nash, who had exerted himself wonderfully, and finished up by drinking his share of wine. “Miles had his ways, and I have mine.”

“All right: it is your own affair. But I’d not have done one thing, my good friend—sent an invitation to your mother-in-law.”

“What mother-in-law?” asked Nash, staring.

“Your ex-mother-in-law, I ought to have said—Mrs. Tinkle. I’d not have done it, Caromel, under the circumstances. It pained her.”

“But who did send her an invitation? Is it likely? I don’t know what you are talking of, Squire.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it?” returned the Squire, perceiving that the act was Madam’s and not his. “Have you ever had those particulars of Charlotte’s death?”

Nash Caromel’s face changed from red to a deadly pallor: the question unnerved him—took his wits out of him.

“The particulars of Charlotte’s death?” he stammered, looking all abroad. “What particulars?”

“Why, those promised you by the man who wrote—Munn, was his name? Charlotte’s diary, and letters, and things, that he was sending off to New York.”

“Oh—ay—I remember,” answered Nash, pulling his senses together. “No, they have not come.”

“Been lost on the way, do you suppose? What a pity!”

“They may have been. I have not had them.”

Nash Caromel walked straight away with the last words. Either to get rid of the subject, or to join some people who just then crossed the top of the path.

"Caromel does not like talking of her: I can see that, Johnny," remarked the Squire to me later. "I don't believe he'd have done as he did, but for this second Charlotte throwing her wiles across his path. He fell into the snare and his conscience pricks him."

"I daresay, sir, it will come right with time. She is very pretty."

"Yes, most crooked things come straight with time," assented the Squire. "Perhaps this one will."

Would it, though!

The weeks and the months went on. Caromel's Farm seemed to prosper, its mistress being a most active manager, ruling with an apparently soft will, but one firm as iron; and little Dun grew to be about fifteen months old. The cow might have behaved ungenteelly to him, as Miss Bailey's ghost says to Captain Smith, but it had not hurt the little fellow, or his stout legs either, which began now to be running him into all kinds of mischief. And so the time came round again to August—just a year after the fête, and nearly two years after Nash's second marriage.

One evening, Tod being out and Mrs. Todhetley in the nursery, I was alone with the Squire in the twilight. The great harvest moon was rising behind the trees; and the Squire, talking of some parish grievance that he had heard of from old Jones the constable, let it rise: while I was wishing he would call for lights that I might get on with "The Old English Baron," which I was reading for about the seventeenth time.

"And you see, Johnny, if Jones had been firm, as I told him this afternoon, and taken the fellow up, instead of letting him slope off and be lost, the poachers—— Who's this coming in, lad?"

The Squire had caught sight of some one turning to the door from the covered path. I saw the fag end of a petticoat.

"I think it must be Mrs. Scott, sir. The mother said she had promised to come over one of these first evenings."

"Ay," said the Squire. "Open the door for her, Johnny."

I had the front door open in a twinkling, and saw a lady with a travelling cloak on her arm. But she bore no resemblance to Mrs. Scott.

"Is Mr. Todhetley at home?"

The soft voice gave me a thrill, and a shock, though years had elapsed since I heard it. A confused doubt came rushing over me; a perplexing question well-nigh passed my lips: "Is it a living woman or a dead one?" For there stood Nash Caromel's dead wife, Charlotte the First.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

## THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, Author of "Through Holland."

ONE day last spring I received a letter from a friend, asking me to visit him in the Orkney Islands. I had formed other wishes and plans, but one after the other had to be set aside. Time went on; summer was passing; I felt more than the universal want of mere change of air—it must be especially bracing. Thus, for many good reasons, I decided to go up to Orkney and Shetland.

But at this point I found myself in the horns of a dilemma—how to get there. In the great Metropolis of London there existed not one office to furnish the information. As the last resource I went down to the celebrated Cook's establishment. They could tell me how to go round the world; how to get through Egypt; point out the very source of the Nile; but they could not tell me how to get to Orkney. No wonder that I at once gave up further search, and telegraphed to Aberdeen. I knew that the Orkney steamer left Granton twice a week, calling at this "Granite City." The days proved to be Tuesdays and Fridays.

There are various ways of reaching Orkney. You may go altogether by sea, from London to Aberdeen, and thence to Orkney: or half way by land and half by sea, starting from Granton: or almost altogether by land; crossing over from Thurso, in the extreme north of Scotland, to Stromness in Orkney. This boat carries the mails. The passage along the Pentland Firth occupies from one to two hours, and is often frightfully rough. This route is the most fatiguing and expensive of the three indicated, but the best because the shortest for those who suffer much at sea. The long passage in calm weather and a not overcrowded boat ought to be very pleasant. Before it really becomes so, the company of each line must organize a few very necessary reforms.

For the sake of quiet, rest, and sea air, I chose the long route to Orkney. The first stage was from London to Aberdeen. I left the Temple pier at two o'clock on the 1st of August, 1877. A tug was in waiting to convey all passengers down the river to the Aberdeen boat who did not care for the long drive to Wapping. The tug was crowded, greatly to the peril of the rest and quiet I had been hugging to my bosom for some days past in fond delusion. At last the boat started, and presently came up to the Aberdeen steamer. The boats on this service, it is well known, are fine and good. For a short passage of two nights and a day nothing better need be desired. My first care was to seek out the steward and secure a berth.

"Very sorry, sir," replied that important personage, "but I

haven't one to give you. Every berth in the ship was taken three weeks ago."

This was such plain speaking that remonstrance was evidently useless. At least, he would give me a shakedown on the floor of the large cabin. Even here I was nonplussed. Not a mattress or pillow in the ship but had been bespoken twice over. This was too much for human nature.

"What is to be done?" I asked. "Do you expect me to remain for two nights on deck and get neither sleep nor rest?"

"Very sorry, sir," repeated the steward. "I often wish I could expand the ship. But you are welcome to a seat on a form, and the table for a pillow."

"That will never do," I answered. "When the time comes, somehow or other you must find me a shakedown on the ground."

And somehow or other, when the time came, he found what was required. It proved, too, far more comfortable and airy than a berth in a small, confined cabin, made to accommodate four persons.

Soon after three o'clock the good ship steamed away from "Wapping Old Stairs," and the journey began. We had not started many minutes before a lady, charming no doubt, but simple, went up to the wheel-box—the long mahogany cover stretching from wheel to stern—and surveying it with perplexed amazement, at length exclaimed, to the no small amusement of her hearers:

"A curious thing! A *very* curious thing! Is it a piano?"

Out on the broad sea: a great part of the time too far from the coast to distinguish it. The most interesting and picturesque point was Flamborough Head, which stood out bold, grand, and beautiful, with its fine cliffs and green sunny surface. By five o'clock on Friday morning we entered the difficult and dangerous harbour of Aberdeen. The sight was magnificent when I first went on deck. The sun had risen; clouds and sword-like streaks of flaming colour were scattered about the sky in amazing splendour; the air was keen and clear. Most of the passengers on deck looked wild and dissipated—the result of two uncomfortable nights on board. A young traveller, with whom I had chummed during the voyage, had had his rug appropriated by a lady whose ideas seemed to be hazy on the distinction between the rights of meum and tuum: and he was wondering how he could claim his own without shocking her delicate sensitiveness. The town before us looked cold and uninviting, with its houses of dull-grey stone. Before six o'clock all had landed. There had been nothing to complain of but the supplies. These were very bad, and more than one passenger gave up all attempt at sitting down to meals. A very unwise economy on the part of the Company.

I had the whole day before me. The Orkney steamer would not start before six in the evening. There is much that is worth seeing in Aberdeen and its neighbourhood: in the old and the new town; the old being, naturally, more quaint and curious than the new.



Especially worth visiting is King's College, with its fine new library, and its ancient chapel fitted up with magnificent carving black with age. Near it is the quaint cathedral, which dates back to the 14th century, but has been restored from time to time. Not far from here is the lovely spot where the river Don flows to the sea, in a deep vale or ravine. In the distance is the picturesque old bridge. Many trees surround and embower it, growing down to the very water's edge. There the branches droop gracefully, and behold their reflection in the rippling water, which they stoop to kiss. Now and then a fish splashes up in this well-stocked stream. You take a path to the left, indicated by the coachman, and gradually walk round towards the bridge, where the carriage has gone on to meet you. Half way in the walk you pause and look around. The spot is beautifully wooded, and looks almost wild and tangled. In a bend to the left is this Bridge of Balgownie, whose praises Lord Byron has sung. At the bottom of the rugged steep runs the river. You trace its course to the right. The cliffs open, as if to give passage to the stream, and beyond lazily sleeps the sea. Immediately before you, but on the opposite side, is an old water-mill, with a pair of wheels; one below the other; so that the water thrown off by the upper wheel is caught and utilized by the lower. Surely this is very Scotch-like in its economy of power? Any way it is a charming object in a most romantic scene. You get to the bridge at last; and note the beauty of its situation, of its surrounding trees and tangles: the reflection of all in the sparkling water. You would like to follow the banks far up out of sight. But time, like the ever-rolling stream, runs on; the carriage is waiting; you bid a reluctant farewell to the spot. So must we bid farewell to Aberdeen. We cannot pretend to enumerate its attractions, such as they are. Our business is with Orkney—and our space is limited.

We left Aberdeen at six o'clock on Friday evening. The boat was the *St. Magnus*. I had telegraphed to Aberdeen for a berth, but the boat had left Granton with many more passengers than it could accommodate; and I found that there was no chance even of a shake-down upon the floor. Another night to be passed as best it might. That would certainly have been above, but with darkness came bitter cold, and the decks were unsheltered.

It was a very small boat compared with the London steamer, and there were about 200 people on board. The greater number were bound for Wick, the last point to be touched before finally leaving the Scotch coast. We were due at Wick the following morning about four or five o'clock. The boat was so crowded that I believe many passengers stood throughout the night. Some, whose constitutions had been hardened perhaps by porridge and mountain air, and whose bones had been well seasoned by Scotch mists, patrolled the deck until daylight: their melancholy pacings resounding in the ears of the unfortunates below.

More unfortunate, certainly, than they need have been. At midnight, when a few happy passengers were asleep; and others were resting; and some, like myself, were passing the hours in an upright position, and the luxury of a cane-bottomed chair: wondering whether Orkney would contain sufficient to repay so much trouble and discomfort: sundry intoxicated Scotch drovers on board, entered the cabin with noise and loud tones, and scattered confusion broadcast. They had no right there under any circumstances. But these



BRIDGE OF BALGOWNIE.\*

men freight the boats to a considerable extent with cattle, and in return are given a free passage, and tacit permission to do very much as they like. From midnight until four o'clock the cabin was a scene of riot and noise that aroused every peaceable inmate, and put to flight all attempt at sleep. Remonstrance was in vain. It is a shame and disgrace to any Company from interested motives to submit its passengers to the contact of a set of men whose place in the scale of creation it would be difficult to define. The sooner this

\* Many of the drawings which accompany these papers are taken by permission from photographs by Messrs. Wilson and Co., of Aberdeen.

is put right the better for the reputation of all concerned, and the welfare of the passengers. It is said that this only happens occasionally, but no matter how seldom, it is still too often.

We reached Wick the next morning about five o'clock. Here the boat stayed some time, unloading passengers and cargo: when we started once more the ship had considerably lightened. We were now bound for Kirkwall, the capital of the Mainland of Orkney. There was a good deal of swell upon the sea, but the water was gradually taking a more beautiful and transparent colour, as we travelled northwards. The sky was clear and bright, the air seemed particularly rarified. We left Wick in company with a flock of sea-



KIRK WALL CATHEDRAL.

gulls; beautiful objects as they hovered over us with their snow-white breasts and black backs. Several of them kept in our wake for two or three hours, watching for anything that might be thrown to them; the smallest fragment did not escape their piercing eye.

So we went on. The Scotch coast lay to our left, a long line stretching outwards. Finally we passed John O'Groat's house. Before this we had seen one of the Orkney Islands. Gradually we got amongst them and passed now one, now another; until the chief island, or Mainland—Pomona, as some call it—came in sight. As we neared the town its proportions developed.

A small harbour and pier, in the foreground, numerous little craft at anchor therein. Beyond and behind this, the town. It looked, at first sight, poverty-stricken, without the slightest pretension to

beauty of any kind. The houses were small, and built of dull-grey stone, than which nothing can be colder or more repelling. Nothing can be said in praise of their design: fancy—eccentric or otherwise—has not been at work here. The windows appeared to have been let in at the pleasure of the builder, without any attempt at regularity. Square holes cut in the brickwork, with invisible sashes and no sills, so that from a distance they seemed unglazed, and the houses looked windowless, deserted, and left to ruin. This was a first view and impression of Kirkwall.

As we neared the pier, a cloud of sea-gulls flew and screamed around us with wild clang; here and there a cormorant stretched its long, straight, black neck from out to water, to disappear the next moment in a long dive after its prey. Around us, very much like a horse-shoe, the island sloped upwards, rose and fell in long sweeping undulations; went in and out in bays and sounds. Other islands stretched behind us in the distance, so that we seemed almost landlocked. The water on which we floated was of the most transparent aqua marine. Behind the houses, on rising ground, might be seen the venerable cathedral with its square tower: the pride of Orkney; the great attraction of Kirkwall. On this sunny day, the situation of the islands, rising out of the sea on all sides, the fine colouring of bright earth, sky, and water, in a peculiarly clear atmosphere, formed an undoubtedly beautiful scene.

As soon as the boat stopped at the end of the pier, porters from the two inns boarded her. I commended my luggage to the man of the "Kirkwall Hotel," and asked the way to the inn.

"You can't mistake it, sir," was the reply. "The first hotel you come to down the street."

I wondered which might be *the* street, and how it was to be discovered. When I grew wiser I found that Kirkwall consisted of one long street only—with sundry offshoots. It was therefore difficult to miss one's way. Straight down the pier, and the street in continuation: a narrow, badly-paved thoroughfare. In a few moments I reached the "Kirkwall Hotel," and secured a comfortable little bedroom and sitting-room. There I took up my abode for a season, and found Mr. Dunnet, the landlord, everything that was civil and obliging, anxious to further the comfort of his guests to the best of his ability. The house was quietly and most respectably conducted.

It was Saturday afternoon. We had landed at half-past one. Having fasted since leaving Aberdeen, it was time to end this involuntary penance. This matter quickly settled, I next asked my landlord as to the possibility of procuring a conveyance to call upon some friends who lived five or six miles from Kirkwall.

Mine host replied that a machine might be in readiness in an hour. I then first learned that in Orkney and Shetland conveyances are invariably called *machines*. On a subsequent occasion a visitor, remarking upon the custom, said that in another place, wanting a

simple one-horse trap, he had asked for a carriage. Presently there came round a dashing concern with a pair of horses, and he almost looked for a powdered coachman and footman. Had he asked for a machine he would have got what he wanted.

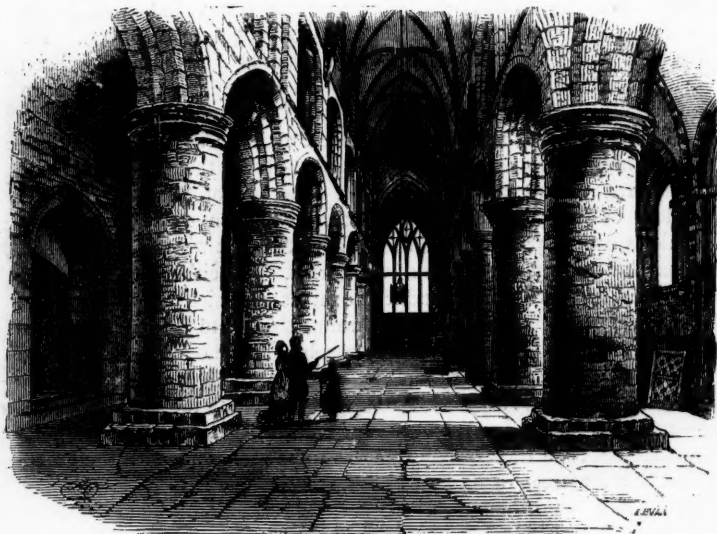
Upon the landlord's recommendation, I ordered the said machine, and wondered whether it would bear any resemblance to those bathing-machines in which one has to sit entombed in wooden walls. When it came round, it proved to be a species of dog-cart. It was impossible to say much for its build, the points of the horse, or the beauty of the harness. But in travelling in out-of-the-way places we soon cease to be fastidious, if we are wise. The driver, seeing that the animal was being attentively surveyed, declared, in somewhat jealous tones, that it was a very good one to go. He did not prove very far wrong. The animal had evidently been made for use, and not for ornament. In Orkney it might have been possible to get nothing of the sort.

That first drive may stand very much as a specimen of my subsequent impressions of Orkney. We went down the long street that winds round, and therefore, though long, is not straight. In the middle of the thoroughfare—so narrow that in many places two vehicles cannot pass each other—about two feet wide of stones had been laid down for the sake of the horses. On either side stretched irregular flags, with here and there holes in which an unwary foot might easily plunge and splash. Turning sharply to the left, we passed the imposing cathedral and found ourselves in the open country. The day had now passed over; the sky was of a dull leaden grey; nature wore her gloomiest aspect. Around and before us the land undulated—rose and fell, in wavy, not abrupt outlines. It was bare and cold-looking. Not a trace of any tree was to be seen, and, with the exception of a few trees in Kirkwall itself, scarcely one is to be found upon the islands. For hedges, as a rule, there are nothing but dry stone walls—the stones laid one upon another without cement. The land was partly cultivated; but corn, I think, does not grow in Orkney. The crops fall far short of the beauty and luxuriance of a milder climate. In this, Orkney stands at a disadvantage with Shetland. In Shetland there is little or no cultivation; all is grandly wild, as it was centuries ago. In Orkney you have a partial cultivation which deprives the country of that aspect of universal wildness which is a charm in itself. To the traveller from the south the semi-cultivation of Orkney yields no beauty of its own.

The road was good. We bowled along, not in style, but in tolerable comfort. To our left hand stretched the sea; and soon to our right also, in a bay. It came up into the land, and the hills surrounded it, and the scene was not without its attractions. But the absence of trees and shrubs was conspicuous, and gave a baldness to the landscape. Far as the sight could penetrate there was nothing but unbroken outlines and bare tracts of land: the dull-grey sky

threw its gloom over all. Scarcely a house was anywhere visible. We passed not a human being in our long drive. No sound but the echo of our horse's hoofs and the rumbling of the wheels. What solitude and repose ! what desolation ! what a spot for shattered nerves, or for any one tired of the world. If all the nuns and monks came to be turned out of their retreats, why not colonise in Orkney ? There they would be shielded from the gaze of the vulgar and the three temptations, without troubling to shut themselves up in convent walls.

By and by we turned out of the white high road into a by-path, rough and rude. We fell into deep ruts, and we fell out of them. Through all, the horse never stumbled, but kept on its way, calmly



NAVE OF CATHEDRAL.

taking the rough with the smooth ; an example of patience to those who sat behind and were not so calm. Soon we came in sight of a grey stone house, which the driver informed me was the manse, and my destination. At length we reached it. It stood alone. Beyond it the little church, which Sunday after Sunday and year after year sees the same faces within its walls, and father and son from generation to generation. Thus the minister becomes verily the pastor and father of his flock. A strange face on the Sunday morning is a rare occurrence. He watches his people grow old ; the young pass into full life ; he has christened them all, and calls them all by their baptismal names. A perfect state of existence to one whose love is in his work ; whose heart is large enough to hold all the troubles and joys of his congregation ; who sees one after another of his simple folk drop out from their places which know them no more.



Many a man in Orkney is a farmer on his own account, who in England would be no more than a day labourer. A small farmer, it may be, but his own master. Destitution and beggary seem to be unknown. You see poor, deserted-looking cottages or huts, built of the everlasting grey stone, in the same dry, loose manner as the walls. They look the essence of wretched discomfort. Yet they are not so. The occupants have their bit of land which they rent from the "laird," and even pay a good price for; and scarce one amongst them but has a little hoard put by for a rainy day, or old age, or some special purpose. Most of the men, too, are travellers. Few but have been "down South," or even further than



WEST DOORWAY, KIRKWALL CATHEDRAL.

that somewhat undefined boundary. Now and then, it is true, a cunning rogue gets in amongst them; a black sheep creeps into the little fold. Not long ago, a young man came down upon a poor widow, old and blind, and persuaded her that he was her long lost son. She kept him all the winter in warmth and idleness, to find at last that she had spent her money and her love upon a worthless impostor. So he was quickly turned away, and the poor widow was made twice desolate.

As we stopped at the manse I noted its situation. It was solitary in the extreme. The sea was before it in a bay. Far below lay the village: so far that we could just distinguish a dull-grey house and a small church. The surrounding land was barren and uncultivated; most desolate in appearance; wild moorland. And yet, in a very

short time, you grow to love it. Coming to it with reluctance, you in the end leave it with no less. The fresh breeze of the sea seemed laden with health-giving powers.

My friends pressed me to take up my abode with them. But I had brought work with me to Orkney, and for a time required the solitude of my room at the inn. So, in spite of a warm welcome, I was compelled for the present to relinquish the pleasure of their hospitality.

Hospitality ought to be taken as the key-note of the islands. Years ago : before the days of railroads and even long after : strangers were welcomed to the islands, whoever they might be, wherever they might wander. They might visit a house, and take up their abode, and be sure of a greeting, and scarcely have a name required of them. This free and unfettered hospitality has of necessity somewhat changed with the times. Everybody travels in these days. Many a wanderer would be an undesirable companion to receive unbidden into the bosom of the domestic hearth. As a rule, some introduction is necessary, however slight, before doors fly open, and you become one with the inmates of the sacred precincts they enclose. Nevertheless, as on most islands, kindness and hospitality distinguish the people. If you call upon a friend you are expected to remain a week. This is scarcely surprising considering the distances that sometimes separate houses. Not every day does a man care to drive thirty miles—as I did, when in Shetland—merely to pay a morning call.

I left my friends that afternoon, when the horse had had an hour or two's rest. Our drive back to Kirkwall naturally very much resembled our drive out : with the great difference that always exists between going and coming. How great the contrast, for instance, between going up a river and going down. In these islands they have not a choice of many ways ; they cannot greatly vary their journeys.

As we entered Kirkwall, we passed the cathedral on our right ; on our left the ruins of the Earl's palace and the Bishop's palace. With surprise we come, in a far off, out-of-the-world place, such as Orkney, upon this group of buildings of a bygone age : the cathedral still old and entire, with the exception of the steeple, and the palaces that have passed into substantial but beautiful ruins. Shame to the inhabitants that they are not kept in better order !

The cathedral of St. Magnus is of Scandinavian origin. It is of different periods of architecture. It was commenced by Jarl Ronald, about the year 1137, the result of a vow he had made to build a church should a certain expedition prove successful. By him it was dedicated to his uncle, St. Magnus, who had been foully murdered in the island of Egilshay, some twenty years before. The first period is in the Norman style of architecture, and the massive pillars and round arches, guiltless of decoration, possess in themselves something severely grand and dignified. The next period is Gothic, with its

beautiful pointed windows, but very little decorated. The last portion was added in the 16th century by Bishop Reid.

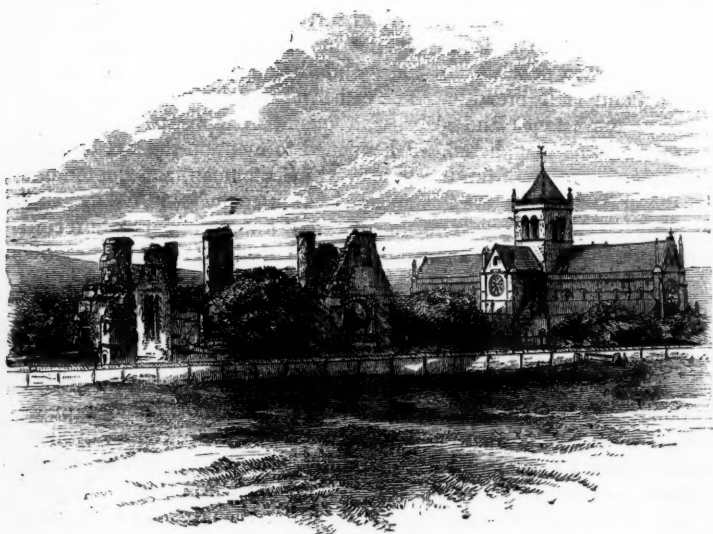
The interior is cold and rugged, but it has a grandeur of its own that is very imposing. The chancel is shut out from the nave by a high screen of wood and glass, an unsightly object which destroys the harmony of the interior. You pass beyond into the choir or chancel, where is now held the service of the Established Church of Scotland. It is a beautiful bit of architecture, but spoilt by ugly, straight-backed, high pews, by galleries which peep out between the arches. The beautiful pillars have been miserably defaced by white-wash. One of these contains the heart of St. Magnus. Here, too, you find the two styles of architecture, Norman and Gothic. The east window is beautiful in form and design, measuring 36 feet in height, and 12 in breadth. The cathedral contains many ancient and curious tombstones and slabs, with quaint epitaphs, some of them too worn to be deciphered. I happened to mention the fact one day in the coffee-room of the inn to a worthy Scotchman, and quoted one of the epitaphs—"Here lies an honest gentleman"—"Ay! ay! sir," replied he: "but you go further and find a more remarkable record than that. The next tombstone beyond declares: '*Here lies ~~an~~ honest WOMAN!*'" It was impossible to avoid laughing at the tone of astonishment which expressed so doubtful a compliment to the fair sex.

The exterior of the building is simple, but grand in its severity. Cruciform in shape, the proportions are good. It is built on rising ground, which adds much to the general effect. The west doorway is most beautiful and ancient, with its mixture of red and yellow brick and its ornamental work crumbling to decay. The whole building is chiefly of red sandstone, but it has well resisted the lapse of ages. It is 236 feet long, and 56 feet wide: the cross is 92 feet long, and 28 feet wide. The tower is about 140 feet high: the steeple was struck down many years ago, and in place a small covering has been erected, which half ruins the general effect. It would be far better altogether removed. The surrounding houses are for the most part small, poor looking, from the nature of their design and material, and dull in aspect. The contrast is strange and violent, but only causes the cathedral to be grander and more imposing whilst it increases one's surprise at finding it there.

It was a difficult task to ascend the tower. Many of the steps are almost worn away, and the staircase narrows alarmingly. We came to the belfry. I was accompanied by two gentlemen—one of whom was a stranger like myself, and had preached the day before an eloquent sermon within those walls—and we pealed out a short salute to the town. One of the bells bore an inscription setting forth that it had been re-cast in Amsterdam; and quickly took me back in thought to the quaint old city I had so recently visited. Here, indeed, was a widely different scene.

We ascended yet higher, and went outside, and from the four quarters of the tower took a long view of the surrounding country. It was a mixture of calm, smooth sea and undulating land, barren and naked. Within the town a few trees had managed to grow into a somewhat stunted existence: a few gardens were pleasant oases amidst a desert of dreary houses. But in the surrounding country no tree nor shrub was visible. Far away in the seas other islands could be traced.

The town lay at our feet. The houses looked grey and desolate:



CATHEDRAL AND RUINS OF THE EARL'S PALACE.

the small courts, leading up to so many of them, dirty and poverty-stricken. But it is in the look that this exists, more than in the fact. Dirty they certainly are; and on a wet day their byways are almost impassable. But the destitute want and poverty that we hear of in other towns and countries seem to be little known in these islands. Its poorer population can live upon very little; most of the men are fishers; and if they can do nothing else they can generally catch their dinner. Herrings, too, abound, and may sometimes be had twelve for a penny. Fresh from the sea they become almost a delicacy. The Orcadians are in advance of the Dutch in this respect: they take care to cook their herrings.

## FRANZ WERNER.

A CHRISTMAS TALE, FOUNDED ON FACT. BY LOIS SELBON.

## I.

"H AVE you seen Franz at all?" asked Herr Rudolph Werner of his brother Oscar one afternoon, as they were preparing to leave the office. "It is very strange he should not have come near the place since yesterday morning."

"I saw him last night," was the rejoinder. "He came in to spend an hour with Francisca, who was not very well. You know those two are great friends. He said then he was not sure about coming to the office to-day: he might have to go out to the works."

"Does it strike you, Oscar, that Franz goes to the works very often? that he has been singularly absent-minded of late? And very irregular here?"

"Franz is not as regular as he used to be, Rudolph; or perhaps," he added hesitatingly, "quite as attentive to things as he ought to be in a house that has you for its chief. But we must not forget that business never was much to Franz's liking. He only took to it on leaving the University because you urged it."

Herr Rudolph's brow darkened at the suggestion. After a moment's silence Oscar continued:

"There is something else, Rudolph, that both my wife and I have noticed about Franz lately—he looks very ill, and is decidedly out of spirits. He used to be so full of fun: now you hardly ever hear him laugh."

"I have seen him looking moody and not himself occasionally," replied Herr Rudolph. "But the chief point is this irregularity, which *must be stopped*. Think of the example, Oscar! I have never allowed the smallest infringement of rules, and I shall certainly not begin now. I shall speak to Franz seriously."

And with these words Herr Werner buttoned up his coat, and strode out of the office with the firm, decided step of a man who never has given way an inch and never will.

The speakers were brothers. The elder, Rudolph Werner, was at the head of a leading iron and steel firm in South Germany. He was a remarkably shrewd, intelligent man, yet so proud and haughty that the latter qualities occasionally blinded him to his own best interests, if those interests did not relate to matters of business. He was proud of his self-made name, proud of his well-known integrity; above all, proud of his justice. Strict justice could always be got at the hands of Herr Rudolph Werner, but woe to the man who hoped

for sympathy and indulgence from him. His two younger brothers, Oscar and Franz, who had successively become his partners, looked up to him with boundless admiration, but with great awe as well. He had made his will their law since the day when, at eleven years of age, he had ordered them to shoulder their tiny bundles and follow him into the wide world to seek their fortunes. After they had risen to fame and fortune, the second brother, Oscar, had married the pretty and penniless daughter of an old and noble house, and Rudolph Werner had been perfectly satisfied with the match. "She brings no money," he observed, "but we do not want it, and the connection is all we could wish for." He himself had married his old master's daughter, Gretel, years before. He had loved her from the day that her father, worthy Hans Preis, had taken in the three lads, weary and travel-stained, and pretty Gretel had offered to be their sister and playmate. Both marriages had turned out singularly happy ones.

The above conversation had taken place in Rudolph's own private room in the counting-house. Oscar looked much troubled, for he had given a shrewd guess himself as to the reason of Franz's frequent absences from work, and dreaded the idea of his elder brother's thoughts taking the same direction. He determined to consult his wife, and did so that same evening.

"Do I know what is the matter with Franz?" cried Francisca. "Why, of course I do! He is head over ears in love! How stupid you men are—I have seen it for ever so long; but either the love is hopeless, or it is wasted upon some one we should not approve of. I think the latter is the more likely of the two, for if not, I feel sure Franz would have made me his confidant."

"Whichever way it is, Francisca, you must stand his friend now, and get at the bottom of the matter. Rudolph is very much vexed at his frequent absences from the counting-house, and is going to speak seriously to him on the subject. You know what that means. There is no saying how Franz may take it in his present mood."

Francisca's answer was cut short by Franz's sudden appearance. He stood still, looked at them a moment, and then exclaimed:

"How solemn you both look! Talking about me, I shouldn't wonder! I thought I heard my name mentioned as I opened the door. What's the matter?"

"Why were you not at the office this morning, Franz?" began Oscar. "You know you ought to be more regular, and especially more particular in making your excuses to Rudolph."

"I thought so," replied Franz, rather scornfully. "What more?"

"Rudolph asked me to-day what takes you out to the works so often," continued Oscar, looking Franz steadily in the face. "In fact—he has made up his mind to speak seriously to you about it, and you know what that will end in."

"Oh, yes, I know," said Franz, bitterly. "I shall be told to marry, only he must choose the wife. I know all about that, but—



look here, Oscar, once for all, *I will not bear it*. I will only marry the woman I choose for myself, or I will not marry at all. You say Rudolph wants to talk to me? He shall do it to-night. I want to talk to him too, and I will go now, and have it over."

Without another word he jumped up in hot haste, snatched his hat off the table, and was out of the room in a moment. Oscar looked after him, and shook his head. He himself would have avoided a "serious" talk with Rudolph at all risks: and he was not fiery-tempered when roused, like Franz.

## II.

Whilst Rudolph and Oscar had been talking over the change that had come over Franz in the earlier part of the day, Franz himself was galloping hard on the high road to Hilgendorf. The day was frosty, and the horse scattered showers of diamond dust all around him as he flew along the well-known road, and stopped almost of his own accord at the door of a little cottage on the outskirts of the village not far from the Werners' works. Everything looked beautiful and bright in the wintry sun. The young man, with the light of hope in his eyes, was out of the saddle and under the little porch at one bound. At the same moment the door opened, and a young and most beautiful girl came out with her finger on her lip.

"Hush," she said. "Mother has just fallen asleep. She never closed her eyes last night."

"Lisa, I must speak to you," said Franz, pleadingly. "If I cannot come in, where can we go? I have so much to tell you."

The girl hesitated. "It is the last time," she murmured to herself; "it surely cannot be wrong. I, too, have much to tell you, Franz. Come this way; we can go to the little seat, near the window, and then I can hear if mother calls for me."

Franz, after tying his horse to a tree, came and stood before her. He felt happy and joyous, whilst the young face before him was sad and downcast. But the deep blue eyes were brave and steadfast, looking up at Franz.

"After what I told you last Sunday, you ought not to have come again, Franz. Not that it matters much now—and perhaps it is as well." Here her lips began to quiver; but she controlled herself and went on. "For it is the last time we shall meet."

"But, Lisa, I *could* not stay away," Franz broke in, impetuously. "The two last days seemed as if they would never end. I cannot live without you," he went on, passionately; "and now I have quite determined, since you will not engage yourself to me secretly, to *force* Rudolph into giving his consent."

The girl looked at him earnestly. At his first words, a ray of

hope had come to brighten her sweet face, but it soon faded away, and the old look of quiet resignation took its place.

"Dear Franz, we will not lose our last precious moments in going over the old ground again. You know in your heart a secret engagement would not be right. Already the neighbours are beginning to talk because you come here; just as they did in the town. I thought you would have believed me then, and not sought me out afterwards."

"But, Lisa, I could not help it: I must see you. I have only kept it from Rudolph lest he should prevent my coming."

"I know it well," she answered, sadly; "but *you* know it can never be. We are proud, though so poor, and of no account in the world. Your brother's consent you will never get. Remember, he is your guardian, and, according to our laws, you cannot marry without it. Even if you could, Franz, should I ever feel happy, knowing I had sown dissension amongst you all? No, no, there is only one right way—we must part!—yet—I am glad you came once more, just to say good-bye!" A sob rose in her throat, and she trembled all over. "Franz, we are going away to-morrow—far away! Farther away than Hilgendorf is from D., that was no use, you see," and she gave a sad little smile.

"Going away, Lisa! What can you mean? You are joking!" Then, seeing she was quite in earnest, he burst out with: "You shall not go! you shall not be hunted from place to place for me. If that is why you are going, I promise you not to trouble you with my presence any more, whatever it may—"

"Hush, Franz, hush; it is all settled—you are not turning us out. It is best so in all ways. I shall be able to care for mother better in the new home—shall not be obliged to leave her so much alone. But do not try to find us out; you would never succeed; if you did, it would be of no use; you *know* your brother would never allow you to marry a penniless girl in his employment. This is what I wished to tell you, Franz, and also to bid you farewell, once more—for ever." Her voice quivered, but her heart was firm; and devoted as she was to the man before her, she felt she must not break down, for he needed all the help she could give him, to bear the sudden, bitter pain, become so familiar to herself by days of thought and preparation.

"Lisa," he said at length, "you cannot mean what you are saying—going away for ever! Why should Rudolph be such a tyrant—though he has done so much for us? He *shall* give his consent."

"Don't, Franz! It makes it so much harder to bear. Be patient—"

"Patient! how can you talk of patience, Lisa? If you can, I do not believe you care for me."

Lisa turned deadly pale. "*Care*," she said. "Oh! Franz, I did not want to make the parting harder for you than I could help. But, Franz, I care so much that the prospect seems like a living death to me. It is the leaving light and warmth behind, and going out into

cold and darkness friendless and alone! Death will be light in comparison with this!"

The last words were spoken dreamily. She was gazing far out to where a thin, dark line marked the horizon between the snow-laden sky and the snow-covered earth. The sun had disappeared, the landscape had become grey and mournful, and the girl shivered.

"Lisa," cried a feeble voice at this moment from within, "Lisa, where are you, my child?"

"There's my mother calling. Franz, will you not say a last word to me?" and she held out both her hands to him imploringly. "Forgive me, Franz, I cannot help it!" Then he seized her hands.

"Lisa, I cannot give you up. I will find a way out of it all. Only tell me where you are going."

"Lisa, Lisa," cried the feeble voice again.

"Never, Franz. Farewell, my dearest earthly friend, and may God bless you!"

"I must kiss you, Lisa."

"Once, for the last time," she murmured, and she held up her sad, sweet face to his.

He caught her to his heart, and gave her one long, lingering kiss; then she disengaged herself as quickly as possible and ran into the house. Untying his horse, he rode slowly away, miserable and wretched.

### III.

The meeting between the elder and younger brothers that night ended stormily, as Oscar had feared. Rudolph began by telling Franz that he had heard rumours of his being often seen among the people employed in the warehouses, and lately a great deal at Hilgendorf; "and not at the works," he added somewhat sarcastically, looking keenly at his brother. He hoped that no more whispers of the kind would reach his ear, and that Franz would at last do him the favour of marrying. "You know it is the best way of stopping all these reports," he added. "Moreover, there is nothing like marriage for getting rid of any discreditable connection you may have formed."

The last words stung Franz to the quick. Lisa's pure, pale face rose before him; he saw her again as he had seen her but a few hours ago, putting all her happiness away from her, prepared to go into a world, strange to herself and her sick mother, only to get out of his reach. It all flashed across him in an instant—the harm he had done her already, the harm he might be doing her now—and he broke out into a torrent of passionate words.

"I know not what you have heard, Rudolph; but I came here to-night to tell you the truth, and you have made it easy for me. You want to know why I do not marry? It is because I have long loved a girl as good and pure as an angel; a girl as much above the girls that you have proposed to me as the day is brighter than the

night. But she is poor; she has no connections. Her father was only a schoolmaster; he could but give his child an excellent education. Four years ago he died, and left his sick wife to the sole care of his young daughter. They came here soon after; they were starving, Rudolph; and Lisa took a situation in your warehouses to keep her mother from want. Rudolph, only let me bring her to you! I loved her from the first moment I saw her. For a year I have been trying to win her; but——”

“Not much difficulty in that, I suppose,” broke in Rudolph, with a contemptuous smile.

Franz barely controlled himself. He went on bitterly. “There you mistake, Rudolph. She is lost to me for ever, unless you help us. Listen to what your miserable pride has brought us to. Lisa Klein, one of the poorest sorters in your warehouses—*listen to it well*—has refused the hand of your brother.”

“Refused you!” put in the elder brother, startled out of his habitual composure. “You have actually been such a fool as to offer to marry her!—and she has refused you?”

“She has refused me. What is more, because I would not take the refusal, and still tried to see her, she has this day bidden me farewell for ever. Before sunrise to-morrow she will be gone; without leaving a trace behind her.”

“This is the most extraordinary story I ever heard,” said Rudolph. “Going!—and you say she loves you—and is poor! And pray what reason does this paragon assign for refusing my brother?”

“Because she is poor, and unknown, and proud! Because she knows you would not give your consent to such a match; because she will not even be engaged to me without your knowledge and sanction.”

“It sounds quite romantic; almost as good as a play. But she is right. The young woman has more sense than you have, Franz. The idea! *my* brother marrying a sorter in my warehouses! a girl picked up——”

“Hold there, Rudolph! Dare to say a word of that kind, and I will not answer for the consequences, though you are my brother. And now I swear to you that I will never marry any other woman than Lisa Klein.”

Franz turned from the room with this, leaving his brother standing in amazement at the young man’s unexpected audacity.

“Who would have thought it?” he soliloquised to himself. “But I will ride out and have a look at this girl: there’s some trick in it. She would never refuse Franz.”

But when on the following day Herr Werner ascertained for himself that the cottage was empty, and its occupants had left no trace behind them, he was astonished; and perhaps a little uncomfortable about his brother. On his return news awaited him, in the shape of a note from Franz.

"By the time this reaches you I shall be half-way to Franckfort. I cannot stay in D— now that *she* has gone. Perhaps by wandering from place to place I may find some clue by which to trace her.— Franz."

"Foolish fellow!" was his elder brother's comment. "On the whole, perhaps it is the best thing that could have happened. Nothing like change of scene for a love-sick brain! I hope he will not find the girl, though—but he could not marry her, thank Heaven, without my consent." With which comfortable reflection, Herr Werner forgot Franz and his vagaries for things of greater importance.

At long intervals Herr Werner would hear that a letter had come to Oscar or Francisca from Franz, but there was never any message for him, and as he asked no questions about the headstrong young man, no information was given him. Thus the weeks and the months went by eventlessly enough, till one day there came a letter addressed to the firm generally, in an unbusiness-like hand. It so happened that the head partner opened it.

"Oscar, Oscar," he called out hastily, a moment afterwards, "look at this! Some one must go off at once. I suppose it had better be you."

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Oscar, astonished at the sound of distress in his brother's voice.

"There; read for yourself. Franz is down with fever, and the doctors say here it is dangerous. Poor fellow! Ill!—all alone amongst strangers—dying, perhaps! Go at once, Oscar, and bring him back with you—if you can."

There were but few railways in Germany at that time, therefore Oscar's progress was very slow; at last, he did rumble into Franckfort, and found his way to Franz's abode. Franz was past recognising anybody. He was tossing about in the delirium of fever, raving of the unkindness of his brother Rudolph, his cheeks crimson, his eyes sunk and glittering. Then he would calm down for a time and call upon Lisa to come to him, imploring her to tell him where she had hidden herself. He was always seeking for her and never finding her!

This was the burden of his feverish wanderings, and for many days and nights Oscar despaired of his recovery. At last the crisis came—that deep sleep from which the fever-patient awakes to new life and strength, or which leads rapidly to the end, if he wake up at all on this side the grave. To Oscar's great joy, Franz's awaking was a renewal of hope, and he could write home a comforting letter to Rudolph, telling how their brother had recognised him with a faint smile on his white face.

That was a bright day for Rudolph Werner. A great fear had seized him—what if his tyranny had led to all this, and Franz should not recover! How gladly would he have given his consent to the

marriage over and over again under the influence of that terror, if that would have brought Franz back to health. But when the comforting letter came, the crust of pride, which had been melting fast, hardened again. He was most thankful to think the danger was past, but he was very glad that Franz had not found "that girl."

"Once get him back, and we will make it so pleasant for him here, that he will forget all about that stupid business—if the fever has not taken it out of him already!" he said to Gretel. So he sat down and wrote to Franz, telling him how happy he was at the thought of soon welcoming him home. Then Herr Werner rubbed his hands and looked happier than he had done for many weeks.

At last, on a hot evening in July, just six months after Franz had left home, the luxurious travelling carriage, bearing him and Oscar to D—, rolled into the old town and halted before Oscar Werner's house. Francisca and Rudolph were at the door in a moment, and it was with difficulty that they repressed all signs of alarm at Franz's altered looks. Pale, haggard, worn to a shadow, it was almost impossible to recognise the once bright, handsome face and figure. The meeting between the brothers was very touching. Neither alluded to the past; but before leaving him for the night, Rudolph patted Franz affectionately on the shoulders.

"You will be all right now, old fellow; you know what a capital nurse Francisca is."

But Franz did not recover as quickly as Rudolph had hoped. The journey had thrown him back, and it was quite the end of August before he was sufficiently well to get about by himself. And, once arrived at this point, he never got beyond it. Month followed month, and he appeared to get weaker instead of stronger. Nothing seemed able to rouse him.

Lisa's name had never once passed his lips. His brothers hoped that he had forgotten her, but Francisca thought otherwise. She had noticed how all his rides took him through Hildendorf, either on his way out or in. That, and seeing Lisa's name on the fly-leaf of a little book kept always in the young man's pocket, caused her to make up her mind to speak.

"Rudolph," she said to her brother-in-law, on the morning after she had come to the above determination; "Rudolph, I want to tell you something very serious. If you do not wish Franz to die, you must find 'that girl' for him."

Rudolph started and changed colour. "My dear Francisca, this is absurd; he has long got over that stupid affair. He is getting all right, and I hope to see him take to business again soon."

But Herr Werner moved a little uneasily in his chair, and there was not the usual decided ring in his voice. The next minute he asked, in his old authoritative way:

"Oh! I see. Franz has told you to speak to me about the matter, Francisca?"



"The girl's name has never been mentioned between us, Rudolph. Believe me, if ever a man fretted away his life in secret, Franz is fretting away his," Francisca added solemnly.

Rudolph looked very much disturbed and annoyed. "I had hoped never to hear of this affair again. Just think what *you* would feel if asked to associate with one of our work-people!"

Herr Werner thought he had hit straight home. To his chagrin, Francisca answered somewhat haughtily in her turn, "I own I do not follow you there. If the girl is a good girl, as she seems to be, and if she can make Franz happy, I shall certainly not object to her."

"You are very good, Francisca. I cannot help thinking you are mistaken."

#### IV.

It was some weeks after the above interview, that a travelling carriage stopped at the tiny hostelry of a hamlet about thirty miles north of Frankfort. Out of it stepped a tall, stately-looking man, whose head came in very rough contact with the rafters as he entered the low public room of the house. He called out in haughty tones, asking if there were any accommodation to be had, and if he could have anything to drink?

"An excellent bed and good beer, most gracious Herr," answered the smiling host. "And, indeed, we have some wine, too, that even the most gracious Herr might not despise—pure old Madeira. Only," he continued, scratching his head in some confusion, "I sent over the last bottle yesterday to widow Klein's. Well, she won't have begun it, perhaps—only Fräulein Lisa always will have the best for her mother. Here, Lotte," calling to his little daughter, "run over with my compliments to Fräulein Lisa, and will she send me back the wine for——"

"Lotte shall do no such thing," interrupted the stranger. "If the beer is good, it will do for me perfectly well." And the traveller, with temper much improved by the warmth and comfort of the great green stove, began to divest himself of his furs.

"And pray, mine host," said he, affably, "who is this widow Klein who drinks old Madeira in this out-of-the way place?"

"To tell the truth, gracious Herr, I cannot rightly tell who she is. She is just widow Klein to us here, always ill and seldom out of bed. Sometimes she lies on Fräulein Lisa's little sofa, poor soul."

"And who is Fräulein Lisa?" inquired the stranger.

"Oh, gracious Herr, our Fräulein Lisa is widow Klein's daughter. It is a good nine months ago since they came to live at Treburg. There was an opening for a respectable young woman to take the sewing class in our school, and to make the women's caps—a deal of work in those great caps, gracious Herr,—and but few can make them; the only woman who could died last year. How Fräulein Lisa heard of this I know not, nor where she came from, for they never talk about themselves. But we all liked the young woman

when she applied for the situation, she was so sweet and modest like. She had not been in Treburg a week, before all the children loved her ; and as for the women, they cannot prize her enough."

The stranger got up and began to get into his furs again. "I will take a stroll, whilst you prepare dinner," he said, and stepped out into the village street.

There was still some daylight left ; the cold winter sun had just sunk behind the old church tower, and the little cottage windows glowed in its last lingering rays. A few minutes brought the stranger to a small white house, standing somewhat back from the road, from whence proceeded children's voices singing a well-known Christmas hymn in parts. The traveller's curiosity was aroused ; he walked up the little garden path, and under cover of some shrubs, looked in at the window. He discovered a number of little people, seated on low forms, suited to the length of their short limbs ; and, whilst their busy fingers plied the needle they practised the pretty hymn they were to sing round the Christmas tree. The teacher sat with her back to the window. All that our traveller could see of her was a slight grey figure, bent a little forward, as if the wealth of golden hair, coiled up tightly at the back of the small head, were too heavy a burden. The room was a corner one, with windows on two sides, so the watcher went round the cottage, and tried again to get a glimpse of what he had guessed at once to be the sewing school. By the teacher's side stood a bed, in which lay a pale, gentle, emaciated-looking woman, listening eagerly to the children's voices. The teacher herself seemed to be letting her thoughts wander a little ; her hands had fallen into her lap upon the work she had been setting for little fingers to do, and her deep blue eyes were fixed absently on the distant hills, visible from the window by which the watcher stood. "What a wonderful face to be in a peasant's cottage !" mused the traveller. Suddenly the girl started and coloured violently. In his eagerness to see more of her, the watcher had leant forward too far, and she had caught sight of him, that was clear. There was nothing now for it but to go round and knock at the door. A very sweet voice said "Come in," and to the inquiry as to whether widow Klein lived there, the same voice answered "Yes, this is my mother," motioning the stranger to the bed.

The sick woman tried to raise herself to welcome her visitor. "Lisa, get the gentleman a chair by me, my child," which Lisa did, moving as if in a dream, but looking so graceful and attractive, that the stranger, whom my reader has long since guessed to be Herr Rudolph Werner, found it difficult to reply to the widow's questions. Whilst he was wondering whether she knew him or not, the clock struck four. Immediately the children began to put up their things, and filed out one by one.

When the last child had gone, Herr Werner spoke. "I have long known your name Fräulein Lisa, and now I am glad—nay I am

thankful, to have made your acquaintance. Will you shake hands with me?"

Once more the colour mounted to the girl's temples, even dyeing her fair throat crimson; but she put out her hand and said simply:

"Thank you, Herr Werner."

"You know me, then?"

"I knew you the moment I saw you out there," pointing to the window. "I have often seen you in D——."

The widow broke in with feverish haste. "Lisa, is this Herr Rudolph Werner? and—you knew it, and never told me! and you let him come in!" Then turning to the intruder, she went on in a beseeching voice: "Why do you come here, sir? Your brother has not been near us since we left Hilgendorf; we have never even heard of him; I assure you most solemnly we have not. And we tried so hard to leave no trace behind; Lisa arranged it all: and then I thought we were going to be quiet and happy once more! Oh Lisa—" and here the poor invalid broke into a wail—"must we go again? can we never rest?"

"Hush, hush, mother!" said the girl soothingly, though trembling herself in every limb; "you are nervous to-day. I will give you some of your wine; it will calm you."

"I assure you Frau Klein, upon my word of honour, I am the only member of my family that has an idea of your present abode. You were very clever, Fräulein Lisa, but you see I have found you out for all that: but I own I had hard work to do it," he added, smiling kindly, and the girl felt a little re-assured and trembled less. "And now it will depend entirely upon you whether the secret remain between ourselves, or be made known to my brother Franz."

At this unexpected turn in his little speech—most unexpected indeed to Herr Werner himself, but he was already completely conquered—Lisa began to tremble again. He led her to a seat; and then when her colour returned and she appeared able to listen, he spoke very gently, taking her hand.

"Don't be afraid of me, Lisa; I want to make up for a great mistake I made; the mistake, my dear, of not having known you a year ago. I see how you have suffered, and so has he, poor fellow. Ah! I know all about it, you see," he added cheerfully, as he saw the painful blush come and go at the mention of his brother. "I have found you out on purpose to talk it all over with you, for everything now is in your hands—but I see your mother needs rest, so I will go. Frau Klein," he added, turning to the bed, "may I come and sit with you for an hour later? I am anxious to have a little more talk with this daughter of yours, and with you too. I think we shall be friends, in spite of the ogre you once thought me, Fräulein Lisa."

Herr Werner walked back to meditate upon how nearly his pride had been death to his brother, and ruin to the life's happiness of

this young creature, for whom he had already conceived a strange liking. "If only it is not too late for Franz," he mused sadly; "he is ill, *very* ill; I cannot doubt it now;—he is but the wreck of his former self. Will she consent? God grant she may! Poor child, poor child!"

Oddly enough when he walked back to the white cottage that evening, he did not feel half as sure of being able to secure his brother's happiness as he had been in the morning. The greater value the prize was assuming in his eyes, the greater became the fear of losing it. He felt all his future peace of mind as well as his brother's happiness depending now upon the decision of this girl! What if she should not consent to help them after all?

## V.

Christmas Eve that year ushered itself in with much shovelling and scraping away of snow. Every corner of the town had to be swept and garnished before nightfall for the coming festival. But the shovelling and the scraping had a cheery ring about them. They told of work and wages, and consequent food and warmth in lowly houses for that one night at least. "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men," is the motto of the day, and he must be a waif and stray indeed who does not find someone to welcome him under the Christmas tree, on Christmas Eve in Germany. The Oscar Werners had no tree, for they always spent their Christmas at the elder brother's house, where all connected with the firm, from the partners down to the youngest errand boy, were won't to assemble under the Christmas tree to receive presents and spend a joyous evening.

This year, however, a shadow had fallen upon the Werner families. Franz, instead of making progress, appeared to get weaker every day. He seemed restless and miserable too. Nothing soothed him but sitting at a window, from which the tower of the Hilgendorf church could be seen on clear days. He had positively refused to make an effort to join his brother's Christmas party. "You are so good to want me, Francisca," he had said, when she had gently tried to urge him once more, "but I cannot—I cannot do it. You are all so good and patient with me, and yet—yet even you do not understand me!" and then, as if speaking to himself, he continued, "You do not understand the misery of despairing to forget!" Then Francisca's blood had boiled within her as she thought of Rudolph's injustice, as she deemed it, to his youngest brother, and had determined to make one more effort on his behalf.

"Rudolph!" she had exclaimed, the moment she caught sight of him on the following morning, not waiting for Oscar and Gretel to be out of hearing; "Rudolph, things cannot go on as they go now. You must, you shall do something for Franz! He is too ill to go into the world and work, and do what might cure another man. What can you be all thinking about here," turning to Gretel, "to let

Franz die by inches without holding up a finger to save him, and all for an *idea*! But," she went on sadly, "it may be too late; who knows if even joy could rouse him sufficiently now?"

Rudolph looked grave, but listened patiently. "Do not judge me too harshly, Francisca. Believe me, I feel convinced that when once all this Christmas rejoicing is over, Franz will rally and begin to mend."

The short December day soon came to a close, and with the first approach of darkness, countless tiny rays of light began to dart out from many windows in quiet by-streets—the richer occupants of first-floors in the more frequented thoroughfares beginning their Christmas revellings at a somewhat more fashionable hour.

The Werner party hurried along, barely giving the children time to exclaim with delight as each new set of twinkling lights burst upon their gaze, and were reflected a hundredfold in all the frozen puddles and crackling snow. It was very cold, and they were a little late. The delay was occasioned by Francisca, who was walking some little way behind the rest, and she had hold of Franz's arm. At the last minute, by a clever stratagem, she had got him to come, after all. When the rest had been ready to start, Francisca had quietly kept her seat by Franz's side and continued her work.

"You will be late, Francisca," he had said.

"I am not going," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Not going!" returned Franz, in amazement.

"You surely did not think I was going to leave you here all alone on Christmas Eve, Franz?"

Then he had got up without another word and fetched his hat and coat, telling her to be quick, or she would miss the opening of the doors. And so it had come to pass that Franz was with them. The air and the exertion seemed to do him good at first; but had it not been for fear of paining Francisca, he would have turned before they reached his brother's house. Happily for him, they were all ushered into a large room adjoining the great hall, just as the first signal for opening the doors was being given, and everyone was too much engaged to notice the new arrivals.

All the children were congregated around the door leading into the hall. They were in a state of frantic excitement, and could hardly be kept from kicking and screaming. Herr Rudolph Werner and his wife were, of course, invisible. True to the old tradition, the "Hausherr" and "Hausfrau" were giving the finishing touches to their tables, and then lighting the tree together. At last the great moment arrives: the bell rings a second time; the large folding doors are thrown open by the master and mistress of the house; a tremendous blaze of light from the tree, reaching from floor to ceiling, dazzles everybody; the children give a great shout and make a rush; inextricable confusion prevails for a moment, and then it gradually appears that there is a place prepared for every-

body at the great horse-shoe table. Herr and Frau Werner lead each one to his appointed place. Of course the presents are numerous and varied, but one thing is the same for each one there, children and grown-up people; and that is the orthodox plate-full of gingerbread, apples, and nuts, and by its side the much-prized "Stolle;" a plain, oblong cake covered with sugar, and baked for the occasion. It would not seem like Christmas in the "Fatherland" without these time-honoured accessories.

After everybody had got settled and glanced at their own peculiar property, it began to be noticed that there were two empty places at the head of the table, without any presents excepting the "Stolle" and the gingerbread. People looked at each other and wondered. "Where is Herr Franz? Cannot he come? Will not he come?" was whispered in low tones round the table.

And then, "Where is Franz?" was suddenly repeated out loud by Herr Rudolph Werner. Having found his brother standing alone in the next room as if unable to face all the light and joy of the hall, he slipped his arm into his affectionately, and drew him gently to his empty place under the tree. "There is hardly anything here for you, Franz. You have been so little yourself of late, that Gretel and I scarcely knew what would give you pleasure. I have got one present for you, however, but I would not bring it in, lest after all you might not care for it, so I left it in the library. Perhaps you will just go in and look at it?" And before Franz well knew what he was doing, Rudolph, who had never let go of his arm, had drawn him from the table to the study-door, had opened it, and shut it behind his brother.

Coming out of the glare of the tree, Franz found himself almost in the dark, for the large room was only lighted by a single lamp suspended from the ceiling. He was not aware of the presence of another person, and a soft voice said "Franz," and a white-robed figure flitted across the room and stood for a moment under the lamp. Franz felt as if he were dreaming. Could it be, or were the old visions haunting him again? "Lisa," he cried, stretching out his arms towards her, "Lisa, my darling! You here! Here in Rudolph's house! Is it reality—or are the phantoms mocking me again?" and he stood as if spell-bound, and very white.

"Yes, dear Franz, it is true, thank God, though I can hardly believe it myself!" And looking towards the door behind which Rudolph had disappeared, she added: "He has been so good to me!" Going up nearer to him, she lightly laid her hand on his arm, looking up at the rigid face a little anxiously. At that touch a sense of reality seemed to come to him; he started, took both her hands in his, and looked searchingly into her face.

"My Lisa still?" he asked, "come back never to leave me again? Will you promise now to be my wife, here under Rudolph's roof?"

"Yes Franz," she answered firmly but so low that he drew her



close to him to hear the words better a second time. Then as she hid her face on his shoulder, the tears, kept back so bravely when they parted, came to her relief and kept her poor heart from bursting in its overflow of joy and gladness. "Oh! Franz," she said presently, "I am so happy, so happy! it has been weary waiting!"

Before he could answer the door opened. "Well children," said Rudolph Werner, glancing in and seeing the complete success of his little plot; "here are a number of people waiting to see what Franz's Christmas present is like. They seem to think that I have behaved very shabbily to him this year, seeing nothing but apples and cakes in his place. Come, Lisa, and help me to redeem my character."

The girl looked up at Herr Werner shyly and inquiringly, but at once took the arm he offered her. He stepped across the threshold into the brightly lighted hall. Close beside the Christmas tree Herr Werner stopped. There was a breathless silence. All eyes were turned on Lisa's fair bent head, and upon Franz, who stood close behind her, with bright eyes and figure erect, as he had not been seen to look for many a long day. "My friends," began Herr Rudolph Werner, "you have been wondering at my brother's empty place? It is filled up at last, and he stands before you; but his presents," and here the clear, strong voice grew husky, "he cannot show you. But I can tell you what they are—Love, and happiness, and rest for a wearied heart and mind! Are not these worth having, though they make no show? They have been brought to him to-night by this dear girl," and he drew Lisa a little forward, stroking her hand encouragingly. "It was not easy work to find her, but thank God I succeeded at last, and then at my earnest request, she and her sick mother accompanied me hither, and Lisa promised never to leave my roof again until she did so as my brother's wife."

This was the signal for a general buzz and hum of congratulation, and Herr Werner spoke once more. "My friends, before our lights have quite burnt down, let us sing a Christmas hymn of thankfulness around the tree, according to the time-honoured custom of our fathers. Let it be the same one that our dear Lisa, here, was teaching her little pupils when I was fortunate enough to see her for the first time, and then we will all drink to the health and happiness of Franz and Lisa." With a trembling voice Lisa began the first line of the well-known Christmas hymn: "Heilige Nacht, stille Nacht?" ("Holy night, peaceful night"), in which old and young joined.

"I owe you a grudge, all the same, Rudolph," said Francisca, when he was taking her into supper. "You might have let me into the secret!"

"My dear Francisca, my pride was so overcome by your noble generosity that I felt it a duty to take all the responsibility of the search and its results upon myself. I have succeeded far beyond what I hoped and expected; and I trust that a look at that sweet, patient young face yonder may always remind me of what my pride

might have brought me to. You might not always be by my side to help me, you know," he added, pleasantly.

In a few weeks Franz and Lisa were married. Franz did not get well and strong at once. It took Lisa more than a year to nurse him back to that. But, at last, he was able to return to his old place in the counting-house, and delighted his brothers by his steady application to business. He had an aim in life now. His darling Lisa and a little Fränzchen had to be provided for.



#### NEW YEAR'S NIGHT.

Now bid the bells ring out !

Now let the red wine flow !

With swelling music and joyous shout,

With laughing lip and with cheek aglow,  
Usher him in who waiteth without

In the dim starlight ;

Usher him in with never a doubt,

This New Year's night.

Oh, he is fair and strong,

His eye hath an eagle glance.

Awaken the echoes, lute and song ;

Swift be the whirl of the mazy dance.

Mirth and joy to the young belong,

And love and light ;

'Tis fitting we be a festive throng,

This New Year's night.

Is it friend or foe we meet,

Gay with the flush of youth ?

Is it life we hail, or death we greet ?

Little—aye, little we know, forsooth.

But the strain is gladsome and hope is sweet,

And the lamps are bright,

And merrily move the dancers' feet,

This New Year's Night.

SYDNEY GREY.

### "THE BRITISH WORKMAN."

SOME little time ago a public-house was established in our parish, and, though I am aware there are many others conducted on the same principle throughout the country, a short account of it may not be without interest.

This public-house was got up by several gentlemen in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of discouraging drinking, by offering rival attractions to the frequenters of the common inns. A house was chosen as near the cab-stand as possible, and a respectable man and his wife were placed in it as managers. A subscription of some five hundred pounds provided for the furniture, fittings, and so on; and the receipts were so large that when it had only been in working order a few months, the undertaking was nearly, if not quite, self-supporting. The chief complaint was that the rooms were too small; that there was not one large and airy enough for musical and scientific entertainments. For something of this sort is provided nearly every Saturday evening by the kindness of amateur friends, and there is usually a large attendance. Thus the funds are greatly increased, and many a man's wages saved for his family, which might otherwise have been spent in intoxicating liquors, the absence of these being the one great distinction between the "British Workman" and the ordinary public-house.

On the ground-floor is the refreshment-room, handsomely fitted up with velvet-cushioned seats and marble-topped tables. Here may be had, at a low rate, tea, coffee, cooling drinks of all kinds, chops, ham and eggs, bread and butter, sausages, pies, and such like, served in or on tasteful glass and crockery, in a neat and orderly manner. Above, are the reading or lecture rooms, where papers of all shades of political opinion and numerous weekly and monthly magazines strew the tables. These are the contributions of different well-wishers—in the case of the local papers, of the publishers or proprietors themselves. A few pictures, also gifts, ornament the walls; and a good library is in process of formation. On the third story are the smoking-rooms, used also for billiards and bagatelle, and for various other games, such as chess, draughts, and dominoes; but gambling is strictly forbidden, and a sharp watch kept, the forfeiture of membership, in the case of members, being the punishment for a breach of the rule. For the use of the billiard-table there is a slight extra charge, otherwise all the rooms and their contents are open to any one on the payment of a penny as entrance-fee, or by the order of some form of refreshment. The subscription for members is twopence a week; one-and-sixpence a quarter; or five shillings a year.

The Saturday evening entertainments are varied as much as

possible, the concerts being perhaps the most popular, and having moreover the effect of developing much native musical talent. Different members of the "British Workman," and ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood, meet together and practise their parts beforehand; and a piano always keeps its place in the reading-room. Lectures on different subjects are given from time to time; and on one occasion there was a fine display of microscopes lent by their owners, the tables on which they stood being beautifully decorated with ferns and flowers.

The weekly entertainments, if not the "British Workman" as a whole, may be regarded as the outcome of an enterprise tried with some success during the previous winter by two gentlemen interested in the welfare of our labouring people. They hired a large room for Saturday nights, where tables were conveniently set out, and a substantial tea was provided for all who chose to attend. The proceedings began at half-past seven, when tea-urns were brought in, to be presided over by ladies—friends of the promoters of the meetings. The men, seated on forms round the tables, then made a hearty meal of the sandwiches, plum-cake, and bread and butter prepared for them, conversation on the current topics of the day going on the while. Afterwards the tables were removed, and the forms placed so as to make something of a semi-circle around a reading-desk. Here one of the hosts took his stand, and read for about the space of half an hour from some book of interest—perhaps a story of moral tendency, clothed in a dress at once humorous and touching. The reading over, the men were invited to sing or to give such recitations as they chose. The pieces selected were mostly racy and original sketches or ballads, in the peculiar dialect of the county; the songs being of great variety, and usually also of great length—including the broadly comic, the ultra-sentimental, and the downright doleful. A piano was hired, on which the accompaniments could be played if required, but these were seldom called for save in the rare case of ordinary drawing-room airs; and now and then a little purely instrumental music was given by way of change. The meetings wound up by the united singing of some popular hymn, the reading of a short passage from the Scriptures, and a hearty mingling of voices in the Lord's Prayer. And though all was generally over by ten o'clock, I scarcely think the men then dismissed would feel strongly tempted to spend the next hour in the grosser conviviality of the common public-house.

How the keepers of public-houses like our "British Workman" I cannot say; but the rest of our little world hereabouts is mostly warm in its favour; and my readers will, I doubt not, join us in wishing it, together with its fellows throughout the kingdom, an earnest "God-speed."

EMMA RHODES.

## THE WHITE HEN.

## A TRUE HISTORY.

IN a small rural district more than a hundred miles removed from this great metropolis, the wish to give some little help to the sufferers of this terrible war, took possession of the inhabitants. Not that they had much to spare; but example is contagious, humanity is catching, and the heart-rending accounts they daily read of the need of aid and the lists of contributions often published, excited their pity and their emulation. A bazaar was hastily got up in the village; and the ladies organizing it went about asking for contributions both in money and kind.

Mr. Cartright — a small farmer, himself struggling against ill-fortune—received them rather ungraciously.

"We are sent to you, Mr. Cartright, to beg of you to contribute ——"

"Sent, ma'am! Who sent you?"

"The committee. Think of the sufferings caused by this dreadful war that's raging. Everyone, I'm sure, will be happy to give what he can. You might glory in doing it, Mr. Cartright."

"I want aid myself, ladies. Charity begins at home."

"Oh, surely you will not refuse us! Think of the poor creatures—the wives and children—dying on the road-side by hundreds. Their dwellings sacked and burned, their poor crops destroyed. Could you not spare a sovereign?"

"My own crops have turned out a failure this year, ma'am. As to a sovereign, I often feel the want of one myself. Money can't be much scarcer with the people you are begging for than it is with me."

"Then in kind, Mr. Cartright," urged these persistently arduous emissaries. "Can't you give us something in kind—of which money may be made at the bazaar?"

The farmer, not a bad-hearted man, but really very poor himself, stood wondering how he could get rid of these gentlewomen. Had he possessed money, he would have given some readily. Turning his hands about in his empty pockets, as he faced the window, an old white hen of his, stalking about the yard outside, set up a "croak, croak."

"I'm not much better off in kind than I am in coin," said he; "my stock has dwindled. There's that old white hen there—you may have that if you like, ladies."

Sure such an offering was never tendered! The ladies thought he might be laughing at them, and felt inclined to resent it. They rose from their chairs with dignity.

"She might sell for something; she has been a good hen in her day," added the farmer; whose intention was at least genuine.

They saw that it was, now, but yet hesitated. Still, every few shillings would swell the amount of the sum total they hoped to send in, and of course a white hen *would* sell. After a few hasty words exchanged between themselves, they thanked Mr. Cartright, accepted the hen, and begged him as a favour to keep it until the day of the bazaar.

Accordingly, on the morning of that auspicious day, an old wicker cage was provided and the white hen arrived. At various convenient stage points in the room devoted to the bazaar, might be read the following notice, written in large, commanding text hand. For the committee, determined to make the most of the odd contribution, had decided on putting it up for sale; and a real auctioneer undertook to preside, and to do his best.

IMPORTED HEN  
TO BE SOLD  
THIS DAY  
BY PUBLIC AUCTION.

The poor old biddy, "white with the snows of many winters," was exposed to view in her cage of wicker, right over the refreshment stall. Two eggs (boiled) taken from the counter were placed in the cage with her.

Nothing in all the bazaar attracted so much attention as this announcement and this white hen.

After stopping to read the notice, as scores did stop, blocking up the way, they pushed their way to the cage. Speculation was rife; curiosity reigned in every breast. Imported! Where had she been imported from? What were her peculiar merits? Innumerable were the conjectures passed about as to the antecedents of this wonderful hen.

The day passed pleasantly away. Farmers came with their families, and villagers came, and a few county people came; a bazaar was a novelty in the neighbourhood, and the sales were not bad. At last, when the afternoon was drawing to a close, the great auction sale of the day came off—that of the white hen.

Mr. Sanders, the auctioneer, mounted the rostrum provided for him, amid the cheers of the impatient spectators, who fancied they were about to hear the past history and pedigree of this remarkable fowl. He held aloft the caged bird for some minutes, turning it round and about, that all eyes might see and be satisfied. Then, putting it on the stand before him, he took up his hammer, and began.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the ecstatic pleasure of displaying before you this imported hen. A hen of most rare and unattainable qualities—a hen that can't be beat, even with a stick, unless you



first take her out of the cage—a hen that is supposed to be of the best breed of hens extant—an im-port-ed hen—im-port-ed; I say ——”

“If you please, sir,” interposed a timid voice, “where’s she im-ported from?”

“Ah!” replies Mr. Sanders, “if I only considered myself at liberty to tell you, I think I may safely say you would be surprised. You’ve heard of the countries over the sea—California—Kam-schatka—Guinea Land—Jericho—well, I don’t say she is from any one of them, or which other she is from; only I do say you might be surprised. An im-port-ed hen! Who’ll give me a bid? This hen is to be sold for the good of the cause. She’s a hen that will fetch just what she’ll bring, and no mistake—a real, live, jolly, happy old hen. See her laugh! A facetious old hen, I tell you. Hear her chuckle! A profitable old hen—is said to have laid fifteen eggs in ten days, and sometimes a good many more. Finest old hen to be found this side of—Poland. Who makes the first bid?”

“Half-a-crown”—from a farmer’s wife.

“Half-a-crown. Thank you, ma’am. Half-a-crown I am bid. Grand old hen! The like of it not to be found outside this cage—fifteen eggs in ten days!—an egg and a half a day! Half-a-crown for the best white hen—the oldest and the wisest. Knows how to lay as many eggs again as a young and silly pullet—tough and strong—better constitution than hens that are not imported—evidently stands migration well. Look at her! Never suffered from sea-sickness, as our simple hens might suffer; never made a wry face or lost a meal—when she could get it. Grand old hen! Who doubles the bid?”

“Five shillings.”

“Five shillings. Many thanks, sir. Here’s this beautiful im-port-ed hen going for five shillings. A real, live, white hen. What a chance to possess her!”

“Seven and sixpence.”

“Seven and sixpence. Thank you, Sir Thomas. Only three half-crowns, gentlemen, for this beautiful specimen of the feathered tribe! Who’ll seize upon this rare opportunity, and bid me another?”

“Ten shillings.”

“Ten and sixpence.”

“Twelve shillings.”

“Twelve and sixpence.”

“Twelve and sixpence. Five half-crowns, gentlemen. Going at twelve and sixpence—the finest fowl in featherdom—lays an egg and a half a day—as they say—and sometimes probably two and a half. Here are two boiled eggs laid to-day, gentlemen and ladies—rare hen—*very* rare hen—going at ——”

“Thirteen shillings.”

"Going at thirteen shillings. Who'll say fifteen? Can't afford to sell an imported hen so cheap—who'll give me the fifteen —"

"Fifteen."

"Fifteen. Many thanks, ma'am."

"Sixteen."

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen. Thank you, young sir. Seventeen shillings I am bid for this rare old imported hen—eighteen shillings, thank you, sir—eighteen and sixpence, great thanks. Who —"

"Twenty shillings."

"Twenty shillings for this magnificent hen. Now you begin to speak up, gentlemen. One pound I am bid for the best imported hen to be found on the ground. Going—going at twenty shillings—who'll give me the twenty-five?—going for the good of its country, a fine old white-feathered domestic bird, the pride of the poultry-yard; staid and well-mannered—worth dozens of your wild young trash—going—going —"

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty-five shillings I am bid—twenty-five. Why, gentlemen, are you going to look on and see this splendid specimen of live stock thrown away?—absolutely thrown away? Going at twenty-five shillings! Make another bid, gentlemen! Think of those poor sick afflicted soldiers and what not, perhaps this very day lying mangled and bleeding before St. Petersburg or —"

"Twenty-six."

"Twenty-six; thanks—going at twenty-six. This fine, rare, im-port-ed hen going at —"

"Twenty-seven."

"The gentleman bids twenty-seven. A thousand thanks. Going for twenty-seven shillings. Will nobody bid more?"

No response.

"Going—going—gone! Knocked down to you, Mr. Jones, at twenty-seven shillings. Sold dirt cheap. F-i-n-e im-port-ed hen! Given for the pure love of the cause," and Mr. Sanders handed down the caged bird.

"Put her up again," said Mr. Jones, returning the sum for which he was indebted.

"Yes, put her up again," shouted the laughing crowd.

Again the white imported hen was put up and sold off at a good price—but not so much as before. Again the money was paid down and again the ancient fowl was given back to be re-sold. For six or eight successive times she was struck off for a few shillings, bringing grist to the bazaar, and producing an amount of fun too great to be estimated. Fifty-six shillings in round numbers did that old white hen produce: and her purchaser was the farmer's wife who had made the first bid. Mrs. Palmerstone bore her prize off in triumph.

Some chaffing was being exchanged between the auctioneer and

his friends, when he suddenly threw himself back with a tragic air. His elevated position enabling him to see what they could not.

"Spirit of despair! What do I behold!" cried he. "That imported hen again! Can't I get rid of her! I've sold her more than a half-dozen times already."

"Put her up again! Put her up! Put her up!" shouted the mirthful crowd.

True enough. Mrs. Palmerstone was bringing back the hen. One of the ladies in the secret had incautiously disclosed to her the truth—that it was old Cartright's white hen. Saying nothing, but not liking to be laughed at, she brought back the prize and presented it for the general good.

Once more the hen was put up. The room now was in one roar of laughter. Her purchaser was a popular clergyman.

"Knocked down to you, reverend sir," cried the auctioneer; "I'm sure she ought to bring you luck. But, look here—just you stay a bit, Mr. Dawson."

The Rev. Mr. Dawson, then carrying off the cage, turned round his laughing face.

"You bought the hen, you know, sir; that beautiful imported hen; but you didn't buy the cage. We must put up that."

Mr. Dawson, taking out the hen, handed the cage to the auctioneer. The hen croaked and fluttered in the reverend gentleman's arms; the audience roared. The auctioneer held up the basket.

"A very fine cage: partaking of the nature of a hen-coop; made of the most undoubted wicker—what did you say, sir? Do for either? Yes. Look at it, gentlemen—formed in the very latest style of fashion—from right over the water—one can't but admire it. Who gives me the first bid for this splendid —"

"One shilling."

"Thank you much, sir; one shilling. It —"

"One and sixpence," interrupted Mr. Dawson.

"Two shillings," cried a gentleman at his elbow, bent on fun.

Here the white hen flapped her wings and made one short but desperate effort to escape from her clerical captor. "Two shillings, and sixpence," shouted he, tightening his grasp upon biddy's yellow legs.

"Three shillings," cried the other voice.

"Three and sixpence," cried the clergyman.

"Four shillings."

"Four and sixpence."

"Five shillings."

"Five and sixpence," cried Mr. Dawson, getting heated. And the auctioneer knocked it down at that.

The old hen was replaced in her cage, and her purchaser was disappearing, when once more he found himself arrested by the voice of the auctioneer.

"Those eggs, sir; those two fine boiled eggs. You have purchased the hen and the cage, but not those eggs. They don't belong to the cage; they are a separate affair."

"I should have thought they belonged to the hen," laughed Mr. Dawson.

"Not at all. I'd not go the length of saying they ever did belong to her. They must be put up to auction for the good of the bazaar—and of the wounded soldiers. Now then."

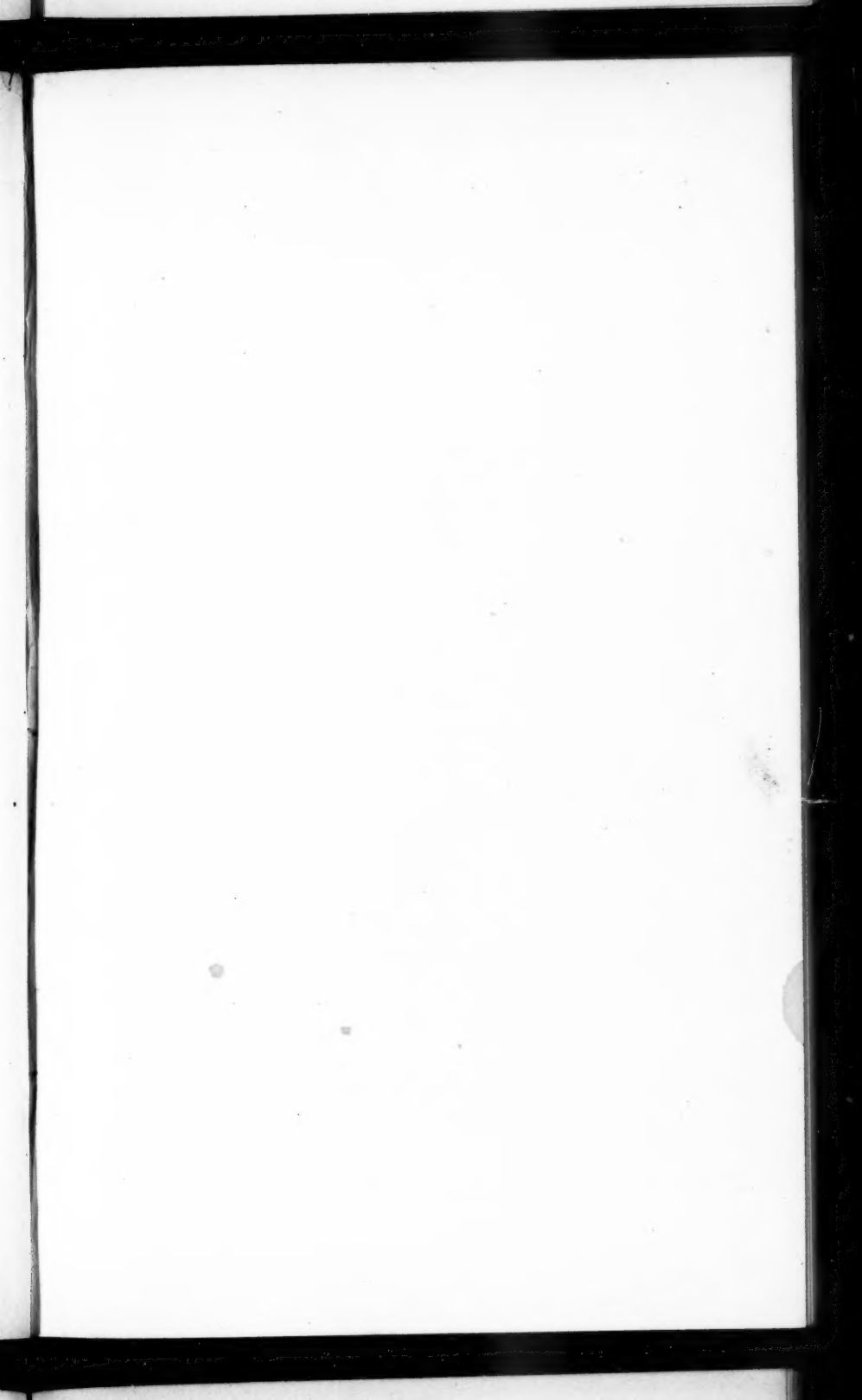
Amidst much laughter the eggs were put up. Mr. Sanders held one in each hand.

"Look at them, gentlemen and ladies. This business must be gone through thoroughly, you know. Two boiled eggs—laid to-day—found in the nest of that im-por-ted hen, and supposed to have been laid by her, already boiled, since she came into this room, as they were not in the nest when she was brought here. Their being laid ready boiled is proof positive of the im-por-ted hen's unequalled patriotism. Two freshly laid boiled eggs—great curiosity—how much am I offered? Sixpence! did I hear a voice say? Did any gentleman say sixpence? Ninepence; thank you, sir. Who will give another—— Here, let's wrap the eggs in paper to keep them clean. Two beautiful fresh new eggs, laid ready boiled by that remarkable hen. One shilling, thank you, sir."

Thus the fun kept on. The eggs were knocked down at two shillings. The proud purchaser was bearing them away when he was called upon to give up the paper they were wrapped in. Mr. Sanders made it into a ball and sold that. Thus, altogether, Farmer Cartright's old white hen brought over sixty shillings to the charity.

The last heard of the imported hen was, that the parson's wife found her a very useless and quarrelsome old thing. It was suggested that the remarkable fowl should be returned to the yard of her original donor, that he might lose nothing by his patriotic gift; together with the sincere thanks of the ladies of the committee for the material aid the white hen had brought. I have only to add that this story is no flight of fancy, but an imperfect sketch of a laughable fact.







M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

NAOMI'S VISITOR.

J. SWAIN.